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PUBLIC POLITICS, PRIVATE GOD:

POLITICAL RHETORIC OF RELIGIOUS MORALITY

IN SELECTED AMERICAN SOCIAL NOVELS

by

Cigdem Pala Mull
Master of Arts, University of North Dakota, 1996

A Dissertation

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This dissertation, submitted by Cigdem Pala Mull in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and hereby approved.

(Chairperson)

Michael Beard

This dissertation meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

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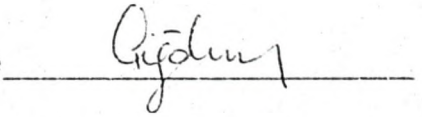
Signature 

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ABSTRACT

Religion and politics have been intertwined throughout the history of the United States, starting from the Colonial period to the present. In this study, I argue that the manipulative use of certain religious morality under the guise of objectivity and universality is a threat to individual freedom and democracy. The privileged discourse of religious morality in the context of politics helps maintain and reinforce the patterns of domination and subordination in society. This dissertation analyzes the relationship of the categories of 'moral' and 'ideological' in the writings of ethical and political critics such as Wayne Booth, Martha C. Nussbaum, Irving Howe, and Frederic Jameson.

In this study, I present textual analyses of four American social novels--Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, Rebecca Harding Davis' "Life in the Iron Mills," Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward and John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath--employing historical, social, political, and rhetorical interpretative strategies. I argue that the use of religious language

and imagery in the context of their political arguments helps maintain the status quo rather than promoting social change towards freedom, justice, and equality.

This dissertation reflects my belief that exploring these ideas and exposing the ideologically manipulative use of religious morality in selected American political novels help us understand our past and function as a warning in the present. Drawing from my observations of Turkey and the United States, I conclude my argument with a call towards a secular humanist politics to protect democratic values.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The use and promotion of allegedly timeless and abstract morality--in the form of religious language and imagery—as an ideological tool to establish power and domination is a strategy that we confront repeatedly in American literature and culture. I think that this is an ideologically manipulative use of the category "moral" as a particular kind of rhetoric because it applies to only a certain section of society rather than the whole. The ideological use of religious morality functions as a force of exclusion. In this study, I will argue that "partisan religion in the hands of a purported majority can become a dangerous form of intellectual and political tyranny" (Kramnick 11).

Ideologies are not always consciously held. More often, they are adopted by members of particular groups without questioning their validity. In his definition of ideology, Sacvan Bercovitch focuses on the issue of justification of a group's actions:

> Ideology is the ground and texture of consensus, the system of interlinked ideas, symbols, and beliefs by which a culture…any culture…seeks to justify and perpetuate itself; the web of rhetoric, ritual, and assumption through which society coerces, persuades, and coheres. (635)

What Bercovitch leaves out of his definition is that often the so-called consensus excludes the "other" or is used to dominate the "other." In order to formulate an ideology, there needs to be a certain group of people sharing the same cultural and historical circumstances. For instance, the beginning of American nation with its colonial heritage of religious discrimination provided the scene for such an ideology. The first settlers in America came to this continent to establish communities in which there would be complete religious freedom. The situation thereafter proved quite the contrary. Puritans [illegible] self-effacement in pursuit of fulfilling God's will [illegible] worldly circumstances hindered this end. Although the Puritans wanted to keep their community unified, capitalistic desires separated them from each other. While preaching the necessity of community for spiritual rewards, the Puritans were led to act as individuals, to seek personal

gains even at the cost of others' happiness. They imagined America as the New Jerusalem, New Canaan, New Eden. Through their typological imagination, they considered themselves the chosen people, liberated from bondage and embracing the freedom of the Promised Land. Their biblical consciousness and the resulting discourse made it inevitable to see the Native Americans as a threat to their unity and hence in league with Satan. Later on, the institution of slavery with its dehumanization of the blacks from Africa was legitimized by religious and political arguments. The moral discernment based on their particular religion justified the colonizers' intolerance of the outsiders.

In Achieving our Country, Richard Rorty argues that "Moral values are created by human beings out of our experience and therefore have no need of any foundation in some entity or force that transcends our needs, desires, and hopes" (16). Following his secular definition, I will also argue that morality and religious faith can be seperable. Ethical principles do not need to possess transcendent validity. Morality's scope is much larger than that of religion. However, dissociating morality from the confinement of religious convictions this way is not

easily possible because religious imperatives have often been presented in the guise of universal morality.

With the introduction of natural sciences and Kant's emphasis on reason in the Enlightenment, the ways of perceiving reality changed. Skepticism, as an intellectual response resulting from the progress in science and a trust in reason, defied any preconceived notions. Consequently, the relationship between religion and morality went through a transformation. In Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age, Bruce B. Lawrence comments on Kant's role in the separation of religion from morality after the Enlightenment:

> By enlarging the role of practical reason and defining the categorical or moral imperative as equivalent to belief in God, Kant spurred the modern quest for the autonomy of man. Kant contrasted the limitless horizons of human potential with the lowered horizons, the 'blinders' of institutional religious life. Kant eloquently argued and repeatedly demonstrated that "ethics do not rest on religion [i.e., metaphysics] but the other way round -religion rests on ethics."(9)

The Enlightenment is a key historical moment because it brought about the age of reason, and the displacement of religion. With Enlightenment, we have the move from the idea that truth can be found in some spiritual and transcendent realm to the idea that truths reside in the actual circumstances. Religious imperatives in the guise of universal morality are seen as problematic in Kant's philosophy. This kind of thinking limits the freedom of human beings by mistrusting their reason. Lawrence connects this tendency to base morality on religion with the waves of fundamentalism that are growing stronger currently throughout the world. The abstract, static morality of fundamentalism poses a threat against the pluralism of diversity and democracy. Pluralism requires the understanding and acceptance that we live together with people who inhabit different worlds of meaning. It is not pretending that the differences have no significance but rather engaging these differences with care and mutual respect.

The problem with religiously grounded moral discernment arises when it is used to exert power, through the claim of divine authority, over people who do not necessarily believe in the teachings of that particular

religion. When partisan religion is used from the position of power to keep the "other" in the subordinated state, democracy is scarred forever. Arguments about democratic concepts should be discussed within the realm of the human rather than the sacred.

Political theories arise in response to individuals' experience of disorder. I am personally drawn to political questions and concerns about humanistic progress, freedom, and democratic possibilities. This study reflects my own concerns related to the manipulative use of certain rhetoric of religious morality under the guise of universality and objectivity that I observed in Turkey and the United States. Partisan religion, turning religious texts into an ideology or party platform, is a threat to individual freedom and democracy.

The founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, saw the dangers of ideological manipulation of religion. He had a rational approach to religion, and his concern to modernize his society was guided by a secularist paradigm of the relationship of state and religion. He started the revolutionary process that brought about the abolition of the sultanate-caliphate system, the end of Islam as the state religion, and the replacement of Sharia

by western codes. These changes demonstrated the impact of modernization and secularization on Turkey. Secularism, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is "the doctrine that morality should be based solely on regard to the well-being of mankind in the present life, to the exclusion of all considerations drawn from belief in God or in a future state." What religion teaches can inspire or motivate political arguments but when religious morality is applied to the present life in order to gain advantage over a certain segment of society, we move further away from the democratic ideal. Turkey still struggles with the fundamentalist factions that want to undermine the secular political system and harm democracy.

Stable and asymmetrical systems of power relations create domination. In "Foucault's Subject of Power" Paul Patton gives his own definition of power: "Power is exercised by individual and collective human bodies when they act upon each other's actions; in other words, to take the simplest case, when the actions of one affect the field of possible actions of another" (67). There are many ways one can exercise power over another, and some of them are not objectionable. Yet when the power for resistance has been taken away, it becomes something more than the

exercise of power over another. Hindering the exchange of power sets the stage for the establishment of a state of domination. Paul Patton writes about the main purpose for which such states are established and maintained:

> One frequent purpose served by states of domination is to enable some to extract a benefit from the activity of others: economic exploitation in all its forms, from slavery through to the system of extraction of surplus value which Marx identified as the secret of capital, depends upon such systems of domination. (68)

In this study, I will argue that the religious morality reflected in selected American social novels helped maintain these systems of domination. The relationship between 'moral' and political in literature is a complicated one because it has proved ideologically tempting to combine these separate but interrelated categories. (Note: I use the word 'moral' as based on religiously grounded convictions.)

I share with many of the political critics the idea that art is inevitably ideological; hence it involves justification and manipulation of ideas. A piece of writing

could have an overtly oppositional status towards the existing political system, proposing alternatives to what is present or it could promote the status quo and support the existing dynamics of power by its seemingly apolitical stance. Similarly, criticism of literature is also ideological. The criticism of the social novels presented in this study reflects my own bias towards a secular, humanist ideology. I also agree with the idea that moral interpretations of literature are also disguised forms of ideologies. Religious morality with its claim of divine authority could be used as a tool for political and intellectual oppression to maintain the stable and asymmetrical system of power.

John Gardner's commentary in On Moral Fiction voices his concern about morality presented in contemporary fiction:

> Too often we find in contemporary fiction not true morality, which requires sympathy and reasonable judgment, but some fierce ethic which, under close inspection, turns out to be some parochial group's manners and habitual prejudices elevated to the status of ethical imperatives,

> axioms for which bigotry or hate, not love, is the premise. (74)

I think there is considerable truth in this comment when applied to the morality we find both in political fiction and in criticism. Gardner also observes that the problem with "morality" is that "it's frequently been used as a means of oppression, a cover, in some quarters, for political tyranny, self-righteous brutality, hypocrisy, and failed imagination" (22). This immoral use of the category 'moral' results from limiting the idea of the moral to a specific religion's imperatives. Within the realm of politics, appealing to the idea of the sacred is an authoritarian move. Religious morality can motivate democratic principles and concepts, but these concepts should be discussed and accomplished in actual circumstances, in actual life, rather than in a projected future or after-life.

In this study, I will examine the ideologically manipulative use of religious morality in four American social novels. I chose to work with novels because they are forms of narratives similar to historical writing or political writing. As instances of the human practice of storytelling, novels reveal the ideologies of their time as

much if not more than historical writing. Bertolt Brecht commented on the ability of fiction to reveal hidden ideologies by

> laying bare society's casual network, showing up the dominant viewpoint as the viewpoint of the dominators, writing from the standpoint of the class which has prepared the broadest solutions for the most pressing problems afflicting human society, emphasizing the dynamics of development. (204)

In order for theater to "lay bare" dynamics of society, Brecht used what he called "alienation effects." Rather than inviting the audience to become absorbed in his plays, he would regularly break the continuity of the action, prompting the audience to reflect actively on what was happening and being said. According to Brecht, fiction has an oppositional status towards the existing forces. Yet the ideologies in novels often reinforce the oppression and domination patterns and promote the status quo.

In The Power of the Story, Michael Hanne comments that "literary fiction contributes to social and political change...primarily in terms of its interaction with other significant forms of human narrative" (36). In this study,

I selected these American social novels because of their "interaction with other significant forms of human narrative" like history and politics. They reflect the ideologies of their times and are exemplary in their dealings with religious morality and politics. The authors of these novels claim social and political authority by appealing to divine authority. But, ultimately, the proposed religious morality functions as a force of exclusion rather than bringing people together. In my criticism of these novels, I will mainly focus on the areas where the categories of 'moral' and 'political' overlap and define each other.

The selected novels in this study have been categorized as "political novels" and treated as overtly political throughout literary and critical history. These novels offer interesting tensions between the categories 'moral' and 'political.' I will present textual analyses of these novels employing historical, political, social, and rhetorical interpretive strategies. I will offer a historical perspective on the genre of the American political novel and will include a critique of American critical traditions and the attitudes towards politics and morality in selected social novels in American literature.

I believe that exploring these ideas and exposing the ideologically manipulative use of religious morality in selected American political novels help us understand our past and function as a warning in the present as this misuse thwarts humanistic progress and democratic ideals.

In order to examine the political use of religious morality in selected American social novels, we need to look at the ways selected ethical and political critics construct a hierarchical relationship between the categories 'moral' and 'ideological.' The main critics that I will work with are Wayne Booth, Martha C. Nussbaum, Irving Howe and Frederic Jameson.

Supported by such critics as Wayne C. Booth, Martha C. Nussbaum, and J. Hillis Miller, ethical criticism supplies readers with a medium for uncovering the ethical foundation of literary works. In his book The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction, Wayne Booth follows Aristotle's concept of ethos:

> The word "ethical" may mistakenly suggest a project concentrating on quite limited moral standards: of honesty, perhaps, or of decency or tolerance. I am interested in a much broader topic, the entire range of effects on the

> "character" or "person" or "self." "Moral" judgments are only a small part of it. (8)

In Company, Booth attempts to "relocate" ethical criticism by redefining ethics. In this study, I will be utilizing the Aristotelian definition of 'ethos' separating it from the limitedness of 'moral' standards or judgments. Ethics is always dependent on particular circumstances, particular situations; it is not timeless, universal or abstract. It is a contextual framework from different viewpoints.

Despite remarkable intellectual efforts to bring ethical criticism into the literary forefront, In The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction, Wayne C. Booth states that ethical criticism found itself in a difficult situation because of its misuse to censor and repress all kinds of literature considered immoral by some. Booth's operating assumption is that the company we keep as we read, watch, or listen to fiction has a potential influence on our hearts and minds just like the influence of the friends and acquaintances with whom we surround ourselves. Wayne Booth gives his definition of ethical criticism in The Company:

> If 'virtue' covers every kind of genuine strength or power, and if a person's ethos is the total range of his or her virtues [to behave badly or well], then ethical criticism will be any effort to show how the virtues of narratives reflect the virtues of selves and societies, or how the ethos of any story affects or is affected by the ethos—the collection of virtues of any given reader. (11)

Although he is aware of the potential misuse of moral criticism as censorship and domination by a group of people over others, in his essay "Ethical Criticism," Wayne C. Booth emphasizes the importance of stories in teaching morals: "While it is true that some moralizers have turned their tales into prosaic sermons, with simple summarizing moral tags, the most effective teachers—those who recognize moral complexities--have chosen narrative, with its inevitable ambiguities, as the chief vehicle" (354).

In The Company We Keep, Wayne Booth concludes his argument by saying

> For many an ethical critic the turn at this concluding point would have been to plump finally for some one theological, political, or

> anthropological base on which to build our judgments. The easy opposite to that unhelpful ploy would be to claim to embrace them all. My choice throughout has been instead the rhetorical or pragmatic choice of pluralism…a pluralism with limits. (489)

I think that Booth's pluralist combination of Aristotelian ethics with Christian morality becomes problematic when these two bases of morality contradict each other especially because of the contextuality of the former.

Ethical critics assume that it is literature's job to teach moral lessons, and this brings the danger of disregarding aesthetic qualities of literature and reducing it to a moral fable. Our intellectual and emotional involvement with the stories that surround us, the stories we read, we hear, we watch, we see provide us with situations of life, and our responses to these situations define our characters. The problem arises when the stories we hear promote a certain kind of character while restraining the growth of others. For instance, religious morality presented in fiction, through the claim of divine authority, can be used as a vehicle to promote certain

ideologies that reinforce patterns of domination and subordination.

Ethical inquiries are intimately related to political inquiries because ethical questions are dependent on the situations that involve the individual in relation with the other members of the group. As Richard Bernstein says in The New Constellation:

> Although we can distinguish ethics and politics, they are inseparable. For we cannot understand ethics without thinking through our political commitments and responsibilities. And there is no understanding of politics that does not bring us back to ethics. (9)

We cannot exclude the question "How should a human being live?" from political reflection. As Edmund Burke points out, "the principles of true politics are those of morality enlarged" (Correspondence 79). Burke is in the classical tradition of Aristotle who argued that the polis exists to enable citizens to become virtuous and lead good lives. Concern for ethical values is intrinsic to political life. Aristotle in Ethics, comments on the goal of politics:

> If politics thus makes use of the other sciences, and if, in addition to that, it lays down rules

> determining what we should do and what we should leave undone, the end of politics will embrace the ends of the other arts and sciences; and that end will be the Good of man. (Chapter II #7)

Political theory for Aristotle is not an entirely distinct subject from ethics; rather, it is a discipline ancillary to ethics. Yet, for him, community ethics within the context of politics is considered more important than individual morality:

> True, the end of the individual is the same [in *kind*] as that of the political community, [and from that point of view we might also say that the end of the individual is the Good of man]; but, even so, the end of the political community is [in *degree*] a greater thing to attain and maintain, and a thing more ultimate, than the end of the individual. (Chapter II #8 Baker 355)

This doesn't mean that political reasoning can overbear ethics, but the ethics of a political community (with its concern for the Good of each and every member of that community) is a more desirable, higher stage in human development than individual ethics. Hence, according to

Aristotle, the categories of "ethical" and "political" are closely related and dependent on each other.

Martha Nussbaum also goes back to Aristotle for her definition of ethos, which is translated as "character" in English. For Aristotle, character is constituted mainly by moral choice occurring in social contexts. In her book Poetic Justice, Nussbaum also argues for the interconnectedness of the categories of ethics and politics by emphasizing their historicity:

> As Aristotle long ago argued, reasoning in ethics and politics is and ought to be different from the deductive reasoning some seek in sciences, for it must be concerned in a more fundamental way with historical change, with the complexity of actual practical contexts, and with the sheer diversity of cases. (86)

The historicity of ethics and politics is crucial for the achievement of the good life. Our values change with the changing times and circumstances, "with the sheer diversity of cases." Nussbaum criticizes theorists who claim that all moral reasoning is characterized by universality and hope moral principles to provide fixed, static guidance before actual situations occur. Following a similar

argument about contingency and contextuality of values, in his essay, "Literature, Power, and the Recovery of Philosophical Ethics", Seumas Miller comments on the "messy particularities of life":

> It is true that moral thinking cannot be entirely immune to abstract considerations or to integration into wider perspectives than the practices themselves provide, but moral thought and imagination need to be rooted in an attentive perception of the messy particularities of life, with all their uncertainties and complexities in full view. Moral thinking can, and must, strive for objectivity, but this does not entail a mindless and insensitive application of a grid of rules and formulae to whatever situation arises. (213)

I agree with both Nussbaum and Miller in their objection to universal morality. Morality based solely on a specific religion's rules cannot be applied to the full complexity of humans' lives. I also agree that moral values do need a ruling principle and that principle is the concern for other human beings.

In her analysis, Martha Nussbaum develops her concept of ethical perception, critiquing moral philosophy's focus on rules. Two features of her analysis are important: the role of perception in constructing the presence of a moral claim, and the need for emotion in proper awareness and response. Martha Nussbaum returns to literature as a source of ethical insight. She "defend[s] the literary imagination because it seems an essential ingredient of an ethical stance that asks us to concern ourselves with the good of other people whose lives are distant from our own" (xvi). John Horton summarizes Nussbaum's idea of novels' ethical contribution as:

> Principally an appreciation of the non-commensurability of values; a recognition of the priority of the particular (a special kind of conception); an adequate understanding of the role and value of the emotions; and an acknowledgment of the place of contingency and uncertainty in human life. These features of ethical reflection can only properly be appreciated within the literary form of narrative. (76)

Nussbaum believes that the inquiry into how one should live would be seriously incomplete without novels. According to her this inquiry involves not only generating and expressing particular answers to that question but also a kind of reflective critical comparison of those answers. Nussbaum's understanding of morality is not solely based on private experience; it is based on care and respect towards the others in community.

In The Modern American Political Novel, Joseph Blotner points out the intricate relationship between the moral and the political that he observes in American history:

> The tendency to judge issues in terms of moral absolutes has been called a particularly American predilection. The idea of political action as a direct embodiment of religious conviction has been prominent in the American ethos from the New England theocracies through the Chautauqua circuits to the Prohibition crusade and beyond. (20)

From the beginning of America, there has always been a group of people who have been optimistic about what religion can accomplish in solving social problems through moral instructions. Religion and politics have been tied

together throughout the history of the United States, from the very beginning of the Colonial period to the present. Colonial Puritans turned to the Bible to overcome the difficulties of starting life in the New World and in their dealings with Native Americans. Later on they found the justification for the system of slavery in the Bible. Religious arguments and justifications have been used by both sides in several significant political issues including slavery, segregation, war, women's rights, gay rights, and the abortion controversy. The severe negative consequences of this tendency are observed in political dehumanization and the exclusion of groups of people. I am mainly concerned about the political use of religious morality from the point of view of the dominators because this use helps maintain domination and thwarts democratic progress.

Edmund Wilson, in Patriotic Gore, writes about a specific period of American history when religious morality was the basis of political action. In his account of the literature of the Civil War, "[Wilson is] trying --as in the book that follows--to remove the whole subject from the plane of morality and give an objective account of the expansion of the United States" (xxxi). In relation to the

categories of 'moral' and 'ideological,' Wilson comments that:

> The difference...between man and the other forms of life is that man has succeeded in cultivating enough of what he calls 'morality' and 'reason' to justify what he is doing in terms of what he calls 'virtue' and 'civilization.' Hence the self- assertive sounds which he utters when he is fighting and swallowing others: the songs about glory God, the speeches about national ideals, the demonstration of logical ideologies. These assertions rarely have any meaning—that is, they will soon lose any meaning they have had—once a war has been gotten under way. (xi-xii)

Religious morality can be manipulatively used to justify injustice and inequity, and the history of the United States provides many examples.

While ethical critics argue that political critics avoid dealing with moral considerations by pretending that their moral discourse is political discourse, political critics argue just the opposite. Irving Howe, in his essays, points out American writers' concerns related to morality. He argues that American writers, in their

political fiction, have often been tempted by the idea of assigning to the realm of politics those issues that could be subjects of philosophy, religion, and morality rather than politics. Howe calls this:

> a special kind of politics…; not the usual struggles for power among contending classes within a fixed society; nor the mechanics of power as employed by a stable ruling class; nor even the dynamics of party maneuvering; but, rather, a politics concerned with the *idea* of society itself, a politics that dares consider whether society is good and necessary. (107)

I agree with Howe's idea that the American political novel has been more preoccupied with promoting "good" and exorcising "evil" in society rather than dealing with strictly political aspects of life. The social novels I will analyze in this study reflect Howe's assessment about the fusion of religion and ideology.

In Uncle Tom's Cabin, using religious morality, Harriet Beecher Stowe invokes divine authority for the novel and by extension its politics by applying this authority based on Christian religious belief to social issues related to her society. In her introduction to the

first illustrated edition of the novel, Stowe claimed that the story came to her from God. She believed that slavery was an evil against which every true Christian must protest. Stowe connects her rhetorical issue about slavery to Christian theology. Her extension of Christian authority claims to society is problematic because it functions to reinforce the domination/subordination pattern she is trying to break.

Rebecca Harding Davis's story "Life in the Iron Mills" is about the destructive power of a hostile industrialized world to kill human potential. The progressive social ideas about the dehumanizing results of industrial capitalism were softened by the fusion of religion and ideology presented especially in her ending.

Despite the fact that Edward Bellamy's Utopia in Looking Backward was highly popular at its time because of its progressive socialist views, it follows a conservative Christian framework. Although Bellamy was critical of strict Christianity and he invented his own religion—The Religion of Solidarity--in Looking Backwards, he utilized Christian allusions and language to gain popularity and acceptance for his socialist ideas.

In The Grapes of Wrath, especially in the interchapters that give a panoramic view of the migrant workers' lives, Steinbeck gives warnings of what can happen when these separate families become one against social injustice. Yet Steinbeck's ultimate sclution lies in conversion to a transcendent religion. The political ineffectiveness of the novel is the result of Steinbeck's emphasis on interpersonal relationships rather than societal politics based on humans' right to justice and equality.

In Politics and the Novel, Howe points out that American novelists sometimes treat "ideology as if it were merely a form of private experience. Personalizing everything, Americans could observe how social and individual experience melt into one another so that the deformations of one become the deformations of the other" (163). It is on this separation of individual and society that political critics base their critique of ethical criticism. Frederic Jameson, one of the strongest defendants of political criticism, in The Ideologies of Theory, argues that

> in the modern world...there are many experiences and situations that are far more complex than

> this, where an individual or a character is faced not with an interpersonal relationship, with an ethical choice, but rather with a relationship to some determining force vaster than the self or any individual, that is, with society itself, or with the politics and the movement of history. (123)

Here Jameson seems to be limiting ethics or moral choices to the realm of interpersonal relationships because of the examples provided by ethical critics. I do not believe that the concept of ethics is excluded from the realm of politics. Jameson continues his argument about the individual and society:

> In these cases, we have left ethical content and ethical criticism behind for a more political or psychological cast, and it follows that a literature for which ethics or moral choices are the principal subject matter will require a fairly stable class content for its development—you cannot explore sophisticated questions of interpersonal relationships in the midst of social upheaval or extreme psychic disintegration. (123)

Jameson sees ethical criticism in opposition to political criticism and as a threat to the historical and political understanding of human beings as determined by modes of production. According to Jameson, ethical criticism, with its promotion of timeless and abstract values, offers an essential and ahistorical understanding of human nature. I agree with Jameson that a privileged understanding of value is in conflict with individuals' historical and political consciousness. My understanding of ethics includes political concepts like freedom, justice, and equality.

Jameson voices his belief that political criticism is superior to other modes of criticism. In The Political Unconscious, he argues "the priority of the political interpretation of literary texts" (17). He offers political criticism not as a supplementary method but as the primary method for all reading and interpretation. I do not believe that he is disregarding the place of ethics within politics but valuing the historicity of communal ethics above individual morality. With that said, I find his political criticism a valid method to approach literature.

As a writer from a non-Christian culture, I am specifically alert to religious rhetoric and imagery used

in political contexts, and through the selected novels, I will argue that manipulative use of religious morality in a context outside the human realm undermines the basic concepts of democracy because it is used to reinforce and maintain patterns of domination and subordination.

CHAPTER II

IN BETWEEN THE "SYMPATHIES OF CHRIST" AND "SOPHISTRIES OF WORLDLY POLICY": HARRIET BEECHER STOWE'S UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

In her book Poetic Justice, Martha C. Nussbaum "defend[s] the literary imagination because it seems an essential ingredient of an ethical stance that asks us to concern ourselves with the good of other people whose lives are distant from our own"(xvi). Over the years, many readers turned to Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel Uncle Tom's Cabin as a source of moral insight and strongly responded to this novel for its presentation of the lives of an underprivileged segment of people. Abraham Lincoln's famous greeting to Harriet Beecher Stowe, "So this is the little lady who made this big war" was significant because of the touch of reality underneath its facetious content. Uncle Tom's Cabin has always been seen as an important contribution to emancipation and the Civil War. In this influential novel, Harriet Beecher Stowe participated in the creation of an ethical reaction towards slavery through

her literary imagination. To accomplish her goal, she used the rhetoric of morality based on Christian religion that was politically motivated to convince people to agree, to participate, and to change. Although the religious rhetoric came naturally to Stowe because of her upbringing and her way of thinking, the use of religious morality is problematic in the novel because it claims divine authority to promote exclusion and anti-democratic principles. Harriet Beecher Stowe believed that slavery was an evil against which every true Christian must protest. In her novel, she posed women and blacks as the practitioners and promoters of true Christianity. She used Uncle Tom's Cabin as her sermon; her means of educating the world about a system that she was convinced was evil and must be terminated.

The presentation of a political and social situation—the system of slavery and its devastating effects on a certain group of people—in terms of a religious myth gives the book its typological texture. According to Jane Tompkins, "[t]he novel's typological organization allows [Stowe] to present political and social situations both as themselves and as transformations of a religious paradigm which interprets them in a way that readers can both

understand and respond to emotionally" (135). Tompki-s' favorable reading of the novel emphasizes the novel's ability to stimulate feelings in its readers. The emotional involvement of the reader is essential to the success of Uncle Tom's Cabin, because placed within the tradition of sentimental fiction, Stowe's work tries to reaffirm the dominance of the moral over the social and political order. The rhetorical excesses of sentimentality are there to promote the moral discourse that has lost its social effectiveness. Through a shared arousal of emotions, Stowe hopes to motivate and achieve a common understanding of morality that can regain its authority.

Throughout Uncle Tom's Cabin, Stowe uses the first person plural pronoun frequently, connecting herself with her readers. Addressing the readers directly and trying to appeal to their senses, she establishes an intimate relationship with them whom she mostly sees as white mothers. In chapter vii, "The Mother's Struggle," Stowe demands the reader's full participation in the emotions Eliza is going through while trying to protect her son from being sold to slave trader Haley:

> If it were *your* Harry, mother, or your Willie, that were going to be torn from you by a brutal

> trader, to-morrow morning, --if you had seen the man, and heard that the papers were signed and delivered, and you had only from twelve o'clock till morning to make good your escape, --how fast could you walk? How many miles could you make in those few brief hours, with the darling at your bosom, --the little sleepy head on your shoulder, --the small, soft arms trustingly holding on to your neck? (56-57)

The sentimental description of the incident, and the psychological evidence given by Stowe here, provide a strong identification between not only the reader and Eliza but also between the reader and the writer. This process of identification validates the communal strength of her religious rhetoric. By maintaining a common emotional bond between herself and her reader, Stowe brings her divinely inspired authorial voice to the level of communal.

In her introduction to the illustrated edition of Uncle Tom's Cabin, Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote, "the story can less be said to have been composed by her than imposed upon her…. The book insisted upon getting itself into being, and would take no denial" (quoted in Fields 289). The implication of the divine intervention in her creative

process gives her the authority of the voice of God, the voice of reason, the voice of "right." Stowe invokes a divine authority for the novel and by extension, its politics by carrying this authority derived from Christian religious beliefs to social issues related to her society. Throughout the novel, Stowe connects her rhetorical issue related to slavery to Christian theology to reinforce the significance of her message. This connection of religious and ideological rhetoric came naturally to her because of her individual experience and the social context of that experience.

Stowe was the daughter and sister of two influential preachers of their generation, Lyman Beecher Stowe and Henry Ward Beecher. All of her brothers, her husband Calvin, and her son Charles were ministers. Her family was an important force in forming nineteenth century Protestant beliefs, and their lives were heavily influenced and shaped by religious notions. Since ministry as a career was not an available option to women, the Beecher sisters used different platforms to preach their worldview. Harriet Beecher Stowe chose writing as her medium and wrote the most popular novel of the century as a sermon against

slavery and for the women's role in achieving true Christianity.

While focusing on women's ways of overcoming the social problems, Stowe distributes the blame of the system of slavery equally to North and South, slaveholders and non-slaveholders because the whole nation strayed from true Christianity and everybody alike was responsible for the inhumanity that the blacks have to go through. Edmund Wilson, in Patriotic Gore, comments on this:

> [T]he novel is by no means an indictment drawn up by New England against the South. Mrs. Stowe has, on the contrary, been careful to contrive her story in such a way that the Southern states and New England shall be shown as involved to a equal degree in the kidnapping into slavery of the Negroes and the subsequent maltreatment of them, and that the emphasis shall all be laid on the impracticability of slavery as a permanent institution" (6).

Although Wilson's interpretation does not reveal the actual reasons for the "impracticability of slavery as a permanent institution," Harriet Beecher Stowe emphasizes the moral problems that the system of slavery causes because it

separates mothers from their children, husbands from their wives. According to Stowe, the inhumanity of the working conditions, the injustice related to work compensation, and the discrimination against a certain group of people are not the actual reasons for the impracticability of this system. The disintegration of the family is the very epitome of an unchristian, unmotherly, unloving life. This idea is in accordance with her sentimental framework.

Throughout Uncle Tom's Cabin, Harriet Beecher Stowe attempts to separate her moral argument from the political. In her "Concluding Remarks" in the novel, Stowe invites her readers "to feel right" and join the circle of sympathy:

> There is one thing that every individual can do, --they can see to it that *they feel right*. An atmosphere of sympathetic influence encircles every human being: and the man or woman who *feels* strongly, healthily, and justly on the great interests of humanity, is a constant benefactor to the human race. See, then, to your sympathies in this matter! Are they in harmony with the sympathies of Christ? Or are they swayed and perverted by the sophistries of worldly policy? (480)

Even though Harriet Beecher Stowe posits the "sympathies of Christ" in direct opposition to the "sophistries of worldly policy," it is difficult to separate her argument of religious morality from politics. Given the fact that the pro-slavery arguments also depended on the Old and New Testaments and found their supporters in "true" Christians, her equation of "sympathies of Christ" with "right" is just another rhetorical move to persuade her readers that her vision of society is the acceptable one. As Tompkins says, "Rhetoric *makes* history by shaping reality to the dictates of its political design; it makes history by convincing the people of the world that its description of the world is the true one" (141).

Stowe's rhetoric of religious morality functions as a political tool in exposing the reader to the immorality of slavery and consequently in reforming society. By attaching words like "right" and "true," to her argument she applies Christian authority claims to society as a whole. While urging her readers to "feel right" "strongly, healthily and justly," Stowe is inviting them to join her who is "in harmony with the sympathies of Christ" and therefore is a "constant benefactor to the human race" (481). Stowe aims to reach a communal morality based on

her own interpretation of the Bible and Christianity through the readers' personal ethics. Her extension of Christian authority claims to society as a whole is politically problematic because in her case religion and morality are being manipulated to promote her own ideology.

In his essay "The Moral Aesthetics of Sentimentality: A Missing Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin," Gregg Camfield comments on the connection between the ability to feel, especially through the moral senses, and the belief in God. This ability to feel invites people to virtue and convinces them to believe in the morality that is presented. According to Camfield, "this is the moral aesthetic that drives Uncle Tom's Cabin. By engaging her readers' human affections in her purified representations of life, Stowe attempts to train her readers beyond the human, toward the divine" (341). All of the emotionally charged scenes in the novel, Eliza's miraculous crossing of the icy river with her child clutching her neck, Little Eva's angelic death, Uncle Tom's last moments are there to invite the reader to feel and consequently to agree with Stowe's ideology.

Although Stowe seems to argue that there is a separation of morality and politics in her novel, her use

of religious rhetoric in the form of universal morality complements her own politics. Ideology is a scheme of ideas hardened into systems in order to help define and justify a group's political and social actions. In his definition of ideology, Sacvan Bercovitch also focuses on the issue of justification of a group's action:

> Ideology is the ground and texture of consensus, the system of interlinked ideas, symbols, and beliefs by which a culture…any culture…seeks to justify and perpetuate itself; the web of rhetoric, ritual, and assumption through which society coerces, persuades, and coheres. (635)

I find Stowe's ideology problematic because instead of offering solutions to social and political complications of slavery within the realm of the human, she appeals to the idea of the sacred to reach the religious sensibilities of her reader.

In Uncle Tom's Cabin, Stowe promotes the dominant ideology that generated the system of slavery to begin with. In his essay "'The Crown without the Conflict': Religious Values and Moral Reasoning in Uncle Tom's Cabin" Thomas Joswick refers to Ann Douglas for an interpretation of Stowe's rhetoric:

> [A]ccording to Douglas, the more elaborately its religious piety is expressed and the more public and conventional its religious rhetoric becomes, the more sentimentalism turns into an irrelevant display of religious values, its only purpose, like that of contemporary advertising, to serve the interests of the dominant class and economic structures. (254-55)

I agree with Douglas's idea that the manipulation of religious rhetoric and sentimentality in Uncle Tom's Cabin functions as a political tool to serve the interest of the dominant class and help the ones who benefit from the status quo. As a white woman, as a member of the dominant class, Stowe is a stranger to the emotions and problems of black slaves, and her sentimental portrayal of their lives reflects her status as an outsider. Although she attempts to capture the pain and suffering of families separated from each other, the agony of torture and endless labor, her presentation of Negro characters and situations involving them seldom transcends the stereotypes created and reinforced by the dominant class.

Stowe's stereotypical portrayal of slaves and their daily lives angered many African American critics. According to Marva Banks:

> Initially, blacks heralded it and were optimistic about the impetus it would give to the abolitionist cause. But as blacks became increasingly aware that Stowe's novel had an equivalent power to foster certain images of black inferiority and could therefore be used to bolster the proslavery argument, their early enthusiasm often changed to skepticism and then to anger. (225)

Among these black writers James Baldwin is notorious with his relentless critique of Stowe's novel. In his fiery essay "Everybody's Protest Novel," Baldwin questions the artistic talent of the novelist as well as her racist ideology. Baldwin comments on the presentation of black characters:

> Apart from her lively procession of field-hands, house-niggers, Chloe, Topsy, etc.--who are stock, lovable figures presenting no problem--she has only three other Negroes in the book. These are the important ones and two of them may be

> dismissed immediately, since we have only the author's word that they are Negro and they are, in other respects, as white as she can make them. (49)

In fact, George and Eliza, two of the three black characters significant enough to be developed in the novel are presented as half-white or almost white. Mrs. Shelby raised Eliza just like a white girl giving her the domestic education that white women receive at home. This quality of whiteness made her flight to freedom relatively easier: "As she was also so white as not to be known as of colored lineage, without a critical survey, and her child was white also, it was much easier for her to pass on unsuspected" (58). As for George, the fugitive:

> We remark, *en passant*, that George was, by his father's side, of white descent. His mother was one of those unfortunates of her race, marked out by personal beauty to the slave of the passions of her possessor, and the mother of children who may never know a father. From one of the proudest families in Kentucky he had inherited a set of fine European features, and a high, indomitable spirit. (121)

Because of his color and demeanor, George can pass for a white person. In fact, in his journey towards freedom, George assumes the personality of a white gentleman. He is different from all the other slaves also because of his education. He is portrayed as almost white in every way to support Stowe's ideology. In "Strategies of Black Characterization in Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Early Afro-American Novel" Richard Yarborough points out that

> Eliza and George rival any white in the novel in nobility of character and fineness of sensibility. That in a sense they *are* white suggests that they represent not only Stowe's attempt to have her target audience identify personally with the plight of the slaves but also her inability to view certain types of heroism in any but 'white' terms. (29)

The characters in Uncle Tom's Cabin are there to prove their writer's moral stance; they are not realistically portrayed. Therefore the characters and their reality of slavery are reduced to an abstraction. Stowe uses her characters to make ethical points about the system of slavery and its insults to the true interpretation of the Bible and Christianity.

In her book Uncle Tom's Cabin: Evil, Affliction and Redemptive Love, Josephine Donovan comments on the use of the Bible as a political tool. According to Donovan, "the Bible may be used to support slavery when it is profitable, but if it were to become unprofitable, scripture would be read to support its abolition" (42). In Uncle Tom's Cabin, Stowe's promotion of Christian morality in order to change the social conditions of a certain segment of society is problematic because it is an aesthetic practice that has its own implications in the evil it intends to expose and destroy. The use of biblical authority for abolition of slavery is problematic because it was the same Christian morality that was forced on a group of people to promote and justify slavery. This is also where Baldwin criticizes the novel's ideology and aesthetic principles. Although they are presented in the form of absolutes and as valid ways of transforming society, Stowe's aesthetic principles and religious rhetoric of morality pose a threat to the social good they try to promote.

On the other hand, over the years, the absoluteness of Stowe's morality in Uncle Tom's Cabin gave some readers the answers they were looking for. In his essay "'Up to Heaven's Gate, Down in Earth's Dust': The Politics of

Judgment in Uncle Tom's Cabin" Joshua D. Bellin comments on the moral guidance Stowe provides for her readers:

> The relief Stowe provided was one of moral surety; she told her audience torn by conflicting self-interests and fearful at the bloody results of making the wrong decision, that there was a simple right and wrong, a clear, absolute guide for how to feel and act. Hers was a promise that, with patience and a devotion to God's judgment, we would win at the last...[Uncle Tom's Cabin] offers readers the opportunity to judge themselves and to decide whose side they are on, the right side or the wrong. In choosing the right, Stowe promises her readers, they will have aligned themselves with the Will of God. (290)

This relief of "moral surety" is what makes the novel ineffective politically. Instead of raising questions, offering alternatives, and inviting readers to think for themselves, the novel presents the ideology of its writer as the only acceptable way. Harriet Beecher Stowe offers her readers a seemingly abstract morality based on her own understanding of Christian religion. Although she directs

each reader towards a reading of slavery, in terms of personal morality, she believes in the communal acceptance of particular ethics with which the reader eventually will align herself. Through Eva's and Uncle Tom's sacrificial deaths, Stowe tells her readers that silent suffering and sacrifice are the moral, therefore more acceptable, ways to deal with the evils of slavery. Little Eva's death is one of the most memorable scenes in the novel. An uncommonly mature child, Eva wants to die for the good of other people:

> "when I saw those poor creatures on the boat, you know, when you came up and I,--some had lost their mothers, and some their husbands, and some mothers cried for their children,--and when I heard about poor Prue,--Oh, wasn't that dreadful!—and a great many other times I've felt that I would be glad to die, if my dying could stop all this misery. I *would die* for them, Tom, if I could." (299)

On her deathbed, she lingers enough to convert unruly Topsy, and change her father's mind about owning slaves. Her dying words affirming her belief in Christianity drove generations of readers to tears. This overly sentimental

section of the novel is successful in achieving its goal of stimulating an excess of emotions and consequently making the reader share the feelings and the morals presented. In The Inadvertent Epic, Leslie Fiedler comments on the success of these sentimental passages:

> It scarcely matters then that the passages in which they are evoked are among the worst written (by conventional literary standards) in the book: shrill to the point of hysteria, sickly sweet to the verge of nausea--yet magically moving, transcending somehow not just the ordinary criteria of taste, but of credibility itself. (25)

Sentimentality as a rhetorical strategy functions here to strengthen the effect of the Christian values presented in the novel. Despite the fact that many readers and critics are critical of Stowe's strategy, they, nevertheless, accept the effectiveness of these excessive emotions. In Visions of America, Kenneth S. Lynn also talks about the positive effects of sentimentality in the novel while emphasizing Stowe's keen sense of how to move her readers:

> Striking to the very heart of the slave's nightmare--and of the white South's guilt--she

> centered her novel on the helpless instability of the Negro's home life. In so doing she also tapped the richest emotional lode in the history of the American sentimental novel. Thus Uncle Tom's Cabin is the greatest tearjerker with a difference: it did not permit its audience to escape reality. (31)

Yet the problem with this reality is that it is based on Stowe's morality and it helps maintain the same patterns of subordination and domination in society. The overly sentimental scenes are there to create a common bond between the reader and the writer that will eventually lead to moral guidance. James Phelan argues that this moral guidance is the main responsibility of an author:

> In short, providing ethical guidance to their audiences is one of the chief things that implied authors do: writing narrative involves taking ethical stands and communicating those stands explicitly, heavy-handedly or subtly--or anything in between--to one's own audience. (321)

Although I agree with the idea that authors take ethical stands and try to communicate them to their readers, my objection to Stowe's ethical guidance is its manipulative

persuasive power through religious rhetoric and sentimentality. In his essay "Everybody's Protest Novel," James Baldwin condemns the novel for its excessive use of sentimentality:

> *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a very bad novel, having, in its self-righteous, virtuous sentimentality, much in common with *Little Women.* Sentimentality, the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotions, is the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel; the wet eyes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his arid heart; and it is always, therefore, the signal of secret and violent inhumanity, the mask of cruelty. (496)

According to Baldwin, Uncle Tom's Cabin caused more damage to black people in America than helped and improved their situation. By creating and reinforcing the existing stereotypes, the novel denied the humanity of the characters it presented. Baldwin argues that "[Stowe] was not so much a novelist as an impassioned pamphleteer; her book was not intended to do anything more than prove that slavery was wrong, was, in fact, perfectly horrible" (496). In order for novels with a political message to be

effective and successful, they need to be complex and even ambiguous to a point because quick, neatly packaged answers are insulting to readers' intellectual capabilities and their right for making up their own minds. Thus because of the sentimentality of her presentation, and the quantity of overt moralizing, the novel had weakened its political message. Harriet Beecher Stowe is successful in presenting the horrible consequences of slavery, but her argument is based solely on her Christian sensibilities, not on the equality and freedom of human beings.

In her essay " 'If Ever I Get to Where I Can': The Competing Rhetorics of Social Reform in Uncle Tom's Cabin," Lisa Watt MacFarlane comments on the political effects of the book:

> Inherent in this book that Abraham Lincoln claimed "started the war," then, are all the reasons that the war failed as social reform. Eliza's freedom does not make her equal; emancipation did not end discrimination; unchecked capitalism and individualism can be destructive forces; Christianity is often twisted to un-Christian ends. (144)

The alternative solutions proposed to solve the problem of slavery prove ineffective in Stowe's novel. The main problem with the solutions is that Christian morality is offered as the only way to approach the problems of slavery, and sentimentality is the vehicle to accomplish this. Like Baldwin, many critics question sentimental fiction's sincerity in dealing with political problems in society. In her essay "Sentimental Power: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Politics of Literary History," Jane P. Tompkins talks about this kind of dismissal of sentimental fiction by some critics:

> In reaction against their world view, and perhaps even more against their success, twentieth century critics have taught generations of students to equate popularity with debasement, emotionality with ineffectiveness, religiosity with fakery, domesticity with triviality, and all of these, implicitly, with womanly inferiority. (123)

I think Tompkins' observation is valid in the sense that women's writing over the years did not get the appreciation it deserved because of the conventions women were trapped in. Although Baldwin's condemnation of Uncle Tom's Cabin

might seem excessive and male-oriented to Tompkins, I think he captures an important problem within the novel that Tompkins misses: an excessive manipulation of human emotions and religious rhetoric to gain the readers' approval and support is in conflict with the ideological goals of the novel.

Even though Uncle Tom's Cabin was successful in attracting attention and getting responses to the "evils of slavery," the novel was also aimed towards another goal. Much of the criticism, especially after the emergence of civil rights movements in the 1960s, emphasizes the importance of it within the feminist tradition. In her book Sensational Designs, Jane Tompkins places Stowe's novel in the genre of domestic novel:

> The popular domestic novel of the nineteenth century represents a monumental effort to reorganize culture from the woman's point of view; that this body of work is remarkable for its intellectual complexity, ambition, and resourcefulness; and that, in certain cases, it offers a critique of American society far more devastating than any delivered by better-known critics such as Hawthorne and Melville...Uncle

> Tom's Cabin was, in almost any terms one can think of, the most important book of the century. (124)

Tompkins argues that Uncle Tom's Cabin must be seen in the context of the sentimentalist tradition whose Christian morality should be understood as a political ideology that asserts power for women. In her novel, Stowe used the problems with slavery as her platform to promote her overriding objective, a new type of society run by women according to the rules of Christianity. This could be seen as a positive role for the ideological frame in Christian terms, yet the identification of the women's situation with slavery, given the fact that the female characters in the novel also reflected the dominant white Christian ideology that once promoted slavery, is problematic.

This identification of the women's situation with slavery presents confusion in the novel. Since there are major differences between slaves' and white women's problems in society, the analogical interpretation is doomed to fail. According to Tompkins, the novel was a political failure because "Stowe conceived her book as an instrument for bringing about the day when the world would be ruled not by force but by Christian love. The novel's

deepest aspirations are expressed only secondarily in its devastating attack on the slave system" (141). Among the characters of Uncle Tom's Cabin, moral authority is assigned to women. Motherly love is the main source for the moral goodness that Stowe promotes in her novel. The female characters and especially the white mothers--we can include Eliza in this group because her physical and intellectual characteristics were described as an almost white woman--act as the sources and distributors of Christian love. As opposed to the masculine involvement with pragmatic worldly policies, Stowe proposes the domestic ideology of women governing with motherly love, religious piety and community habits. However, the woman characters in the novel and Harriet Beecher Stowe as the narrator all end up voicing the dominant ideology's point of view.

The character of Mrs. Shelby, described in the beginning of the novel as "a woman of a high class, both intellectually and morally. To that natural magnanimity and generosity of mind which one often marks as characteristic of the women of Kentucky, she added high moral and religious sensibility and principle, carried out with great energy and ability into practical results" (14-

15), provides an alternative to her husband's businessman like attitude in dealing with the well-being of their slaves. After her husband sells Eliza's son and Uncle Tom to Haley, Mrs. Shelby's outcry is symbolic of the way white women--including Harriet Beecher Stowe herself felt about slavery:

> "This is God's curse on slavery!--a bitter, bitter, most accursed thing!--a curse to the master and a curse to the slave! I was a fool to think I could make anything good out of such a deadly evil. It is a sin to hold a slave under laws like ours,--I always felt it was,--I always thought so when I was a girl,--I thought so still more after I joined the church; but I thought I could gild it over,--I thought, by kindness, and care, and instruction, I could make the condition of mine better than freedom,--fool that I was!" (40).

The social dynamics of slave owning-- once explained and sanctioned by the same religious ethics--prove problematic to women in the novel. They refer to the teachings of Christianity to explain the downfalls of this economic arrangement. Yet, confronted with real decisions, Mrs.

Shelby is ineffective, helpless. She knows that she can't convince her husband about changing his decision regarding Tom and Eliza's futures. Mr. Shelby is already aware of the tragedy of the situation but cannot do much to change the circumstances. The other female role models Eliza encounters on her way prove supportive but not completely effective in Eliza's route to freedom. The only person she can depend on is ultimately herself. So the proposed split between male and female dissolves just like the seeming separation of morality and politics.

In The Power of Story: Fiction and Political Change, Michael Hanne comments on the fusion between public and private, male and female spheres in Stowe's novel: "equally innovative was Stowe's subtle disruption of the traditional dichotomy between the spheres of individual, personal morality (associated with women) and of public, institutional activity (associated with men)" (98-99). Although to me, Stowe's disruptions of these dichotomies are more accidental than innovative, I agree that the suggested boundaries between man's and woman's space, personal and public, and morality and ideology are disappearing within the course of the novel.

Politics and religious morality are closely interwoven in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel. Jane Tompkins points out this interconnectedness of the religious and the secular: "Uncle Tom's Cabin retells the culture's central religious myth, the story of the crucifixion, in terms of the nation's greatest political conflict—slavery—and of its most cherished beliefs—the sanctity of motherhood and the family"(134). The novel's title character Uncle Tom (together with the death of little Eva) provides the story of crucifixion where the sacrificial death of one person brings about change. Young George Shelby's words to his freed slaves after Uncle Tom's death elevates Tom to a Christ-like figure:

> "So, when you rejoice in your freedom, think that you owe it to that good old soul, and pay it back in kindness to his wife and children. Think of your freedom every time you see UNCLE TOM'S CABIN; and let it be a memorial to put you all in mind to follow in his steps, and be as honest and faithful and Christian as he was." (474)

Here the religious rhetoric of this speech by George Shelby functions as yet another way of controlling, dominating, and exerting power over a group of people. Although it is

addressed to the now "free" slaves of the plantation, this speech enslaves their hearts and minds into acceptable Christian morality. The character of Uncle Tom, as a sanctified scapegoat, is elevated to the status of Jesus Christ here. He embodies the religious perfection and ideals of both Harriet Beecher Stowe and the readers she addresses throughout her novel. He becomes a symbol of selfless devotion and intense suffering for the good of other people. The occasion of Tom's death was used by the dominant ideology to promote a certain way of reacting against slavery. Passivity and suffering in silence are glorified instead of activist thinking.

Tom's reaction when he finds out that his long time master Mr. Shelby sold him to Haley because of his debt is typical of his character: "If I must be sold, or all the people on the place, and everything go to rack, why, let me be sold. I s'pose I can b'ar it as well as any on 'em" (45). In Uncle Tom, Stowe attempted to create an ideal Christian character with his silent, redemptive suffering and self-sacrifice but in turn reinforced a stereotype that would be problematic for many readers. He has been criticized for his quiet willingness to submit to the tyranny of white men's arbitrary power. For instance,

James Baldwin's reading of the character Uncle Tom is significantly different from the reading of Tom as fulfilling the ideal of Christianity: "The figure from whom the novel takes its name, Uncle Tom, who is a figure of controversy yet, is jet-black, wooly-haired, illiterate; and is phenomenally forbearing. He has to be, he is black; only through his forbearance can he survive or triumph" (497). According to Baldwin, Uncle Tom's "forbearance" is the result of the reduction of his humanity by slavery and by the attitudes of white people, not because of his inherent religious commitment to the ethics of Christianity. Although Uncle Tom displays rare moments of courage and strength, I agree with Baldwin's reading of him as someone whose inner strength is repeatedly beaten down by the inhuman system of slavery. He represents the dominant ideology's vision of blackness: silent, enduring, devoted Christian.

In his sympathetic reading of Uncle Tom's Cabin, Edmund Wilson points out the irony in Uncle Tom's religious commitment:

> It is only the black Uncle Tom who has taken the white man's religion seriously and who--standing up bravely, in the final scene, for the dignity

> of his own soul but at the same time pardoning Simon Legree—attempts to live up to it literally. The sharp irony as well as pathos is that the recompense he wins from the Christians, as he is gradually put through their mill, is to be separated from his family and exiled; tormented, imprisoned and done to death. (9)

Through the characterization of Uncle Tom, it is evident that Stowe's rhetorical strategy was based on the reaffirming of her own understanding of Christian doctrines. Her opposition to slavery ultimately stemmed from the idea that it was against the principles of Christianity. Instead of the idea that slavery violates universal human rights, her argument was the essentialist view that slavery was a sin against the Christianity inherent in the African race. Although her theology and politics are rhetorically inseparable, her extension of Christian authority claims to society as a whole is problematic. She justifies doing this in her novel by emphasizing the inherent Christian sensibility in the slaves—especially the main character of the novel, Uncle Tom, created in the image of Jesus Christ.

Throughout her novel, Stowe insists that slaves are necessarily closer to the true spirit of Christianity than the whites. Her sweeping generalizations about the slaves emphasize their feminine-- thus Christian--qualities, "in order to appreciate the sufferings of the Negroes sold south, it must be remembered that all the instinctive affections of that race are peculiarly strong. Their local attachments are very abiding. They are not naturally daring and enterprising, but home loving and affectionate" (105), and their openness to religious influence, "...for the Negro mind, impassioned and imaginative, always attaches itself to hymns and expressions of a vivid and pictorial nature" (34). These sweeping generalizations about the "Negro" attitude and mind are used to strengthen her political message. Again what she is portraying is not necessarily an accurate representation of the slaves' lives and their ways of thinking but the ideal picture in her mind.

In Uncle Tom's Cabin, Stowe attempts to disguise her obvious bias towards the passive Christian endurance of pain and suffering. Through her portrayal of Negro characters, Stowe seems to be offering alternatives to ways of overcoming the evils of slavery. The two distinct

directions of Uncle Tom and George Harris are provided to show two alternative ways the black man can react to the inhuman conditions he is put in by the dominant race. Michael Hanne, in The Power of Story: Fiction and Political Change, argues that "In contrast to Tom's engaging, but distinctly archaic, religiosity, George Harris presents a persuasive, modern, rational secularity" (97). Contrary to the title character of the novel, within Stowe's context, Harris can hardly be described as a black man. He is educated–an inventor, in fact–intelligent and his skin is light enough to pass for a white man in his journey towards freedom. His views on slavery are also in contrast to Uncle Tom's silent acceptance:

> "My master! And who made him my master? That's what I think of, --what right has he to me? I am a man as much as he is. I am a better man than he is. I know more about business than he does; I am a better manager than he is; I can read better that he can; I can write a better hand, --and I've learned it all myself, and no thanks to him, --I've learned it in spite of him; and now what right has he to make a drayhorse of me?–to take me from things I can do, and do better than

> he can, and put me to work that any horse can do?" (20)

Eliza's response to her husband's comparatively revolutionary ideas reflect the religious obligations that govern the system of slavery, "I always thought that I must obey my master and mistress, or I couldn't be a Christian"(21). Yet both of these characters gradually change through the course of the novel. Eliza goes through an awakening of her senses when she is confronted with the danger of losing her only child. Exhibiting an outstanding show of courage and determination, she rescues herself and her son from the confines of slavery.

Similarly, Harris's atheistic rationale and social awareness do not stay untouched in the novel. Although in the beginning, he seems to be presenting an alternative to Uncle Tom, his gradual conversion to Christian ethics and his support of the idea of colonized Africa in the end demonstrate that they are not actually alternatives to one another. George Harris goes back to Africa to play his role in fulfilling Stowe's dream about educating an "ignorant, inexperienced, half-barbarized race":

> Let the Church of the north receive these poor sufferers in the spirit of Christ; receive them

> to the educating advantages of Christian republican society and schools, until they have attained to somewhat of moral and intellectual maturity, and then assist them in their passage to those shores, where they may put in practice the lessons they have learned in America. (481-82)

Although in the beginning of the novel Harris's journey towards freedom and his seemingly active political ideas are presented as equally valid to the ideal Christian way, Harriet Beecher Stowe clearly favors Uncle Tom's approach of self-sacrifice and silent endurance to Harris's activist approach. In the end, Harris's development of character and his options for political action are also limited by the same powers that created and sanctioned the conditions for Uncle Tom to suffer and die in silence. In his book The Inadvertent Epic, Leslie Fiedler comments on George's final conversion:

> Far from desiring to find an alternative to the Christian Culture which has enslaved him and unmanned him, a way of life based on polytheism, tribalism, polygamy or free sexuality, he plans to spread the Christian Gospel to his unredeemed

> brethren on the Dark Continent: "As a Christian patriot, a teacher of Christianity, I go to my country," he writes to a friend. (21)

This colonial mentality at the end of the book bothers many critics. The only place for the freed blacks to go is Africa. They are not ready or fit to live equally with whites in America. They also need to be converted and educated according to the morals of Christianity to be able to have a civilized existence. Stowe suggests emigration for black Americans as a way of solving the race problem instead of emancipation and recognition of the rights of free blacks. So the solutions offered by Stowe in Uncle Tom's Cabin are problematic in the sense that they do not resolve the contradictions of the oppression in slavery. In her essay "'If I ever get to Where I Can': The Competing Rhetorics of Social Reform in Uncle Tom's Cabin," Lisa Watt MacFarlane comments on the political ineffectiveness of the novel:

> The problem, however, is that Tom's triumph redeems him and America only in the most personal and the most providential terms; it fails to provide a social or a political solution to the problem of slavery, fails even to return Tom to

> his original master and family. Nor is the solution of the Harris family—the colonization of Liberia—any more satisfying, in spite of their happy migration en masse. (141)

The attempted separation and the consequent fusion of the "sympathies of Christ" and the "sophistries of worldly policy" present similar ideological problems in Stowe's writing. The problem with religiously grounded moral discernment arises when it is used to exert power over human beings, through the claim of divine authority. Here, partisan religion is used from the position of power to keep the "other" in the subordinated state. Stowe's ideological manipulation of the religious rhetoric in the form of abstract and universal morality takes away from the importance of the novel's social message of freedom, and equality of mankind. Harriet Beecher Stowe promotes her own understanding of morality based on Christian religion and influenced by the dominant white ideology to propose solutions to the system of slavery. The resulting situation remains as problematic as before. As MacFarlane comments, "although George and Tom succeed in achieving the freedoms they seek, neither example resolves the spiritual and political oppression of the slave system" (137).

Political concepts like equality, justice, and freedom of human beings should be discussed within the secular context, in actual circumstances rather than a spiritual or religious one. Harriet Beecher Stowe's religious rhetoric and imagery render her political message ineffective. The failure of Uncle Tom's Cabin is its inability to give the political initiative to people. A secular vision in a political novel like Uncle Tom's Cabin would empower people to actively participate in creating their future rather than glorifying passivity and suffering in silence.

CHAPTER III

THE ETHICS AND POLITICS OF INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM: REBECCA HARDING DAVIS' "LIFE IN THE IRON MILLS"

In "Life in the Iron Mills", Rebecca Harding Davis's portrayal of the inhuman living conditions of the immigrant mill workers is considered an early example of social fiction. In "A Biographical Interpretation," Tillie Olsen writes about the radical politics of the "Life in the Iron Mills" and the story's pioneering depiction of the working people characters:

> In the consciousness of literary America, there had been no dark satanic mills; outside of slavery, no myriads of human beings whose lives were "terrible tragedy…a reality of soul starvation, of living death." When industry was considered at all, it was an invasion of pastoral harmony, a threat of materialism to the *spirit*. If working people existed—and nowhere were they material for serious attention, let alone central subject. (88)

In Davis's story, working people finally became a subject of great importance. In "Life in the Iron Mills," the wretched living and labor conditions for the immigrant factory workers during the early 1830s are presented vividly to the conscience of the readers. Jane Atteridge Rose describes "Life" as "a dense compression of disturbing images and ideas" (14). It is a powerful story that demonstrates the power of a hostile industrialized world to kill human potential. In her essay "The Terrible Question of 'Life in the Iron Mills,'" Jean Pfaelzer comments on the political influence of the story:

> Davis did in fact reveal the victory of industrial labor and industrial consciousness over a craft-based, farm-based, and slave-based economy; she showed how the urban factory life dehumanized the immigrant working class, and she exposed the effects of mill work on women. (25)

Even though "Life in the Iron Mills" deals with very important social issues, the ideological problem with Davis's story is that the social ideas about the dehumanizing effects of industrialism were softened and became ineffective by religious ideas presented throughout and specifically in her ending. As Sharon Harris aptly

observes, the issue of Christianity in this text has probably caused the most difficulty for Davis scholars. In her essay "Between Bodies of Knowledge there is a Great Gulf Fixed: A Liberationist Reading of Class and Gender in 'Life in the Iron Mills'," Sheila Hassell Hughes calls Davis' text "a tale that is radically political yet particularly Christian in its lineage and historical trajectory" (114). I will argue that Deborah's conversion to Quakerism at the end of the story takes away from the social impact of the story. Davis's message in the end comes out as more spiritual than progressive.

The timeless and abstract morality based solely on the conventions of a specific religion is an authoritative morality as opposed to a contextual ethics that requires justice and fairness, freedom and equality for all human beings. Thus, Davis' move towards the promotion of a religious morality in the story dilutes her political message. It is difficult to reconcile Davis' radical message with the religious, specifically Christian, features of her story.

In "The Discernment of Perception: An Aristotelian Conception of Private and Public Rationality," Martha Nussbaum comments on the Aristotelian concept of morality:

"Aristotelian deliberation, as I conceive of it, is concerned very deeply with one general notion above all: the notion of the human being. The starting point of an Aristotelian inquiry in ethics is the question, 'How should a human being live?'" (95). The ethical emphasis on human rather than universal and abstract rules is necessary for democracies.

Ethics based on reason and actual human circumstances and morality based on religious convictions differ because of the latter's attachment to strict rules. As John Horton, in his essay "Life, Literature and Ethical Theory," argues "deep, partisan emotional attachment are always a potential threat to an ethical order in which treating people in accordance with their deserts plays a fundamental role" (93). The ethical includes matters of political morality such as justice, freedom and equality. In "Life in the Iron Mills," Davis is promoting a morality based on religion rather than the morality based on humans' right to live in a dignified, just, humane manner. Her gesture towards religion takes her away from an effective discussion of her politics. The rhetoric of religious morality in a context outside the human realm goes against the basic concepts of democracy because it is used to

maintain the patterns of subordination and domination and help the ones who benefit from the status quo.

Sheila Hassell Hughes comments on the time period when "Life in the Iron Mills" first came out. It was published in the April 1861 issue of the Atlantic Monthly:

> during a period variously identified as Victorian, Romantic, or Sentimental. By the time of the Civil War, after Transcendentalism's heyday and before the rise of the Social Gospel Movement, the popular moral ethos was something of a stew…. The mix still betrayed ingredients of Puritan and Romantic notions of individualism, intuition, and symbolism, but was now accompanied by a generous new dose of social conservatism. Distasteful hints of doctrine were sweetened by just the right amount of religious feeling. (113)

In "Life in the Iron Mills," Davis created a story that had social, political, and religious concerns all tied to one another. Davis's story has been described as the "Uncle Tom's Cabin of American capitalism." In fact, "Life in the Iron Mills" has more in common with Uncle Tom's Cabin than the suggested political content. Both writers make use of

religious morality while dealing with social and political problems. Both of them address their readers directly and try to appeal to their sentiments. In his essay, "Direct Addresses, Narrative Authority, and Gender in Rebecca Harding Davis' 'Life in the Iron Mills'" Kirk Curnutt connects this with the tradition of women writers in the nineteenth century:

> As criticism continues to investigate the rhetorical power by which nineteenth-century storytellers established their narrative authority, the idea of 'realistic effects' should be recuperated to explore how women writers in particular appeal to a communal vision of the real. (163)

The women writers share similar visions of social reform arising out of moral reform. Similar to Harriet Beecher Stowe's solution to racism and slavery, the solution Davis brings to the evils of industrial capitalism is in the embracing of a silent, loving Christianity. By appealing to the common readers' sense of religiosity, they establish their authority as writers. This way they are imposing a certain type of religious morality on people in general.

In "Benevolent Maternalism and Physically Disabled Figures: Dilemmas of Female Embodiment in Stowe, Davis, and Phelps," Rosemarie Garland Thompson sums up the morality presented by Stowe and Davis as "benevolent maternalism":

> Where capitalism posits a market economy governed by contractual relations, benevolence posits a moral economy of obligations based on the human sympathy preached by Christianity. Maternal benevolence, then, is an individual social contract enacted by a woman who sees her own will, her covenants with God and her fellow humans, and her capacities for innovative action as extending far beyond the realm of daily needs and kinship circles. (564)

This maternal benevolence based on the ideas preached by Christianity becomes problematic when it excludes people, accentuates the differences among them, and help maintain the systems of oppression rather than promoting justice, freedom, and equality for all.

In her book Rebecca Harding Davis and American Realism, Sharon M. Harris comments on the dominant ideas of the time:

> Prior to 1865, American literature, like American thought, was decidedly religiocentric, and the 1850s, as Jane Tompkins has pointed out, saw a tremendous upsurge in millenarianist revivalism; the sentimental fiction of the period by Stowe, Warner, and Cummins captured and edified those beliefs. (49)

Although Harris is aware of the religious undertones of Davis's story, she argues that Davis was in fact critical of the passive Christian stance and demonstrated this in her story through the narrator's use of irony. Harris's reading of "Life in the Iron Mills" emphasizes the religious language and imagery of the text only as an ironical aspect of form. According to Harris "each level of the narrative structure addresses the issue of language as an instrument of power, and each challenges passive, traditional Christianity as a solution for the nation's ills" (29). The three levels of the story are the three concentric rings of the narrator's, Deb's and Wolfe's story with korl woman in the center of it. The story moves from the outside circle towards the center. Then goes back to the narrator. Harris argues that:

> Each level also revolves around a particular question: for the narrator's frame, it is the question of an awareness of quotidian existence; for Deb's stratum, it is the question of compassion; and for Hugh's realm, it is appropriately that of art, since Davis herself is questioning the old forms creating new. (29)

I disagree with Harris's main argument. Even though Davis was aware of the possible misuses of a religion-based morality by the people in power and tried to step out of that type of thinking, she was trapped in the conventions of the time, of her class, of her status.

Unlike the sympathetic narrator of Uncle Tom's Cabin, the narrator of the "Life in the Iron Mills" is distant to her audience almost to a point of hostility. The narrator is a member of the upper class, she is an outsider to the class she is observing and inviting her readers to observe. Pfaelzer comments that:

> The frame tale encourages identification across class lines, invoking sympathy while at the same time distancing the reader from the story's black and Welsh working-class characters through the use of dialect, foreign phrases, and elevated

> vocabularies, through a series of spectators who guide us "downward" and interpret for us, and through the stereotypical feminizing of working - class men. (29)

Throughout the story, the narrator is addressing the readers directly and inviting them to take a look at the lives she is presenting. The narrator is a socially privileged person writing to inform the privileged class about the poor and underprivileged. I think that the narrator represents Rebecca Harding Davis's own ideas and her self-criticism and apology for being distant to the lives of the lower class:

> There is a curious point for you to settle, my friends, who study psychology in a lazy, dilettante way. Stop a moment. I am going to be honest. This is what I want you to do. I want you to hide your disgust, take no heed to your clean clothes, and come right down with me, -- here, into the thickest of the fog and mud and foul effluvia. I want you to hear this story. (13).

In " 'These mill-hands are gettin' onbearable': The Logic of Class Formation in 'Life in the Iron Mills' by Rebecca

Harding Davis," William L. Watson comments on the significance of the frame story told by a genteel, intellectual narrator. According to Watson, the contrast between the narrator and the characters of the story emphasizes the class differences among them:

> "Life in the Iron Mills" may have staked a place in literary history based on its graphic depiction of that industrial town...but as in the case with the framing narratives of mid-century southwestern humor, Harding's local characters are always seen from the point of view of a narrator who is manifestly not one of the locals. (134)

The narrator's language in contrast with the workers of the iron mills emphasizes the insurmountable differences between them. Davis invites her audience to "come down and look at this Wolfe (25), the Welsh immigrant worker who lived in the old house where the narrator is living now:

> Be just: when I tell you about this night, see him as he is. Be just, --not like man's law, which seizes on one isolated fact, but like God's judging angel, whose clear, sad eye saw all the countless cankering days of this man's life, all

> the countless nights, when, sick with starving, his soul fainted in him, before it judged him for this night, the saddest of all. (26)

Here Davis is contrasting man's law with God's justice. Her distrust in the fairness of man's law and her belief in divine justice prepare the reader for the catastrophic ending of Hughes's life in his own hands as a result of being confined to jail for a long time and Deb's consequent spiritual rebirth after joining the Quaker woman. The solution to the inhuman conditions that the mill workers had to go through comes not from a socialist reform but from the silent acceptance of a peaceful religious belief.

Davis continues to describe Wolfe as "A morbid, gloomy man, untaught, unled, left to feed his soul in grossness and crime, and hard, grinding labor" (25). Yet he is also creative and sophisticated in different ways, "Think that God put into this man's soul a fierce thirst for beauty, -- to know it, to create it; to *be*—something, he knows not what, --other than he is" (25). The statue of a woman that he carved out of korl is his way of expressing his longing for a life better than his present one:

> There was not one line of beauty or grace in it: a nude woman's form, muscular, grown coarse with

> labor, the powerful limbs instinct with some one poignant longing. One idea: there it was in the tense, rigid muscles, the clutching hands, the wild, eager face, like that of a starving wolf's. (32)

According to Pfaelzer, "Unique in American literature before works by such turn of-the-century socialists as Theodore Dreiser, Jack London, and Ignatius Donnely, the statue signifies the growth of a rebellious working-class consciousness"(42). Unfortunately, the korl woman was kept behind a curtain by the narrator because "it is such a rough, ungainly thing" (64).

Throughout the story, Davis attempts to call attention to the humanity of the characters she is presenting. Although these characters are trying to survive in desperate living and working conditions that allow only basic physical functions, their feelings, emotions, raw artistic talents are emphasized by the narrator. After describing Deborah's attraction to Hugh and her awareness of Janey's place in Hugh's heart, the narrator addresses the audience:

> You laugh at it? Are pain and jealousy less savage realities down here in this place I am

> takin you to than in your own house or your own heart --your heart, which they clutch at sometimes? The note is the same, I fancy, be the octave high or low. (23)

Constantly remi ding the readers that they need to rethink and revise thei views, "What do you make of a case like that, amateur p ychologist?" (12), Davis is trying to convince the readers that there is much more to these characters than what meets the eye. Yet, through the narrator, Davis also reveals that hers is not true sympathy.

In "Life in the Iron Mills," Davis repeatedly comments on Deb's physical appearance: "When she walked, one could see that she was deformed, almost a hunchback" (17), she had blue lips and watery eyes. The narrator connects Deb's deformity to her moral character:

> Miserable enough she looked, lying there on the ashes like a limp, dirty rag, --yet not an unfitting figure to crown the scene of hopeless discomfort and veiled crime: more fitting, if one looked deeper into the heart of things, --at her thwarted woman's form, her colorless life, her

> waking stupor that smothered pain and hunger, -- even more fit to be a type of her class. (21)

Although the narrator tries to present Deb as a complex human being, her description of Deb's body and character reduces Deb to a "type of her class." The acute awareness of the class differences between the narrator and the characters she is presenting causes the distance and the hostility of her tone. In her essay "The Terrible Question of 'Life in the Iron Mills'" Jean Pfaelzer comments that:

> Morality resides in sympathy rather than justice. Ellen Moers suggests that the moral goal of women's social fiction is to reveal the humanity of a class or race by making its voice heard; the task of such fiction is to protect against the social risks of ignoring that voice. Thus, Davis's most serious condemnation is the failure of the prosperous visitors (and, by extension, the comfortable reader) to show true sympathy for the new industrial working class. (44)

Besides the working class characters, Deb and Wolfe, Davis also introduces several upper class characters. These men visit the iron mills at night and spend some time observing the workers. They all show interest in Wolfe's artistic

creation but they fail to understand his longing for a better existence and help improve his living conditions. Each man tries to rationalize his lack of true sympathy and inaction.

Kirby, the factory owner's son, forswears any responsibility for Hugh Wolfe, saying, "I wash my hands of all social problems, --slavery, caste, white or black. My duty to my operatives has a narrow limit, … the pay-hour on Saturday night" (35). Through Kirby, Davis also critiques the capitalists' use of religion when it suits them. He finds an escape in Christian rhetoric when asked how he is going to deal with an artist among the mill workers: "I have no fancy for nursing infant geniuses. I suppose there are some stray gleams of mind and soul among these wretches. The Lord will take care of his own; or else they can work out their own salvation" (34). Davis is aware of the political exploitation of Christian values by the people in power. She also knows that Christian charity by itself isn't enough to elevate the life standards of the mill workers:

> Is that all of their lives? --of the portion given to them and these their duplicates swarming the streets to-day?—nothing beneath?—all? So many

> a political reformer will tell you, --and many a private reformer, too, who has gone among them with a tender heart with Christ's charity, and come out outraged, hardened. (15)

Dr. May is another example of the upper class member who fails Hugh. Dr. May prompts Hugh, "God has given you stronger powers than many men," urging him, "make yourself what you will. It is your right." Hugh's simple response, "I know. Will you help me?" (37) brings out no response from the doctor, whose sympathy lacks commitment.

Mitchell, the intellectual, best understands Wolfe and his creation. "It asks questions of God," he explains, "and says, 'I have a right to know.' Good God, how hungry it is!" (34). But ultimately he also rationalizes his detachment. Like the narrator, Mitchell is keenly aware of the gap between the wealthy capitalists and the workers. As a product of his class, he voices the writer's idea that the solution to the exploitation of the workers must come from the workers themselves:

> Reform is born out of need, not pity. No vital movement of the people's has worked down, for good or evil; fermented, instead, carried up the heaving, cloggy mass. Think back through

> history, and you will know it…Some day, out of their bitter need will be thrown up their own light-bringer, --their Jean Paul, their Cromwell, their Messiah. (39)

In his essay "Life in the Iron Mills: a Nineteenth-Century Conversion Narrative," William H. Shurr argues that the bourgeois Mitchell is " an earlier convert to a kind of vague but intensely personal Christian utopianism" (250) which is more religious than either socialist or social. He concludes than Mitchell is, in fact, the tale's anonymous narrator.

It is also Mitchell who helps Wolfe comprehend the problem of the working class with his sarcastic comment, "Yes, money,--that is it," "You've found the cure for all the world's diseases" (38). Mitchell's words give Deb the idea and the encouragement to steal Mitchell's wallet and give to Wolfe, "But it is hur right to keep it" (45). Wolfe's first reaction to the stolen wallet is to return it to its owner. Yet he cannot help but question "Was it not his right to live as they, --a pure life, a good, true-hearted life, full of beauty and kind words?" (46) Hugh Wolfe's decision to keep the money after considerable thinking and soul searching brings the judgement day for

Wolfe: "'Circuit Court. Judge Day. Hugh Wolfe, operative in Kirby & John's Loudon Mills. Charge, grand larceny. Sentence, nineteen years hard labor in penitentiary'" (50). Wolfe was only nineteen and already tired and consumptive when he received this punishment so his sentence was in fact life in prison.

Later on the jailer relates Wolfe's reaction to his sentence: "These mill-hands are gettin' onbearable. When the sentence was read, he just looked up, and said the money was his by right, and that all the world had gone wrong" (51). As Rose argues "[Wolfe's] crime, as an act of desperation, prove[s] the failure of society to provide an environment for soul fulfillment" (15). Wolfe's understanding of right and wrong and justice does not mean anything in a world where he is excluded. Together with the economical and political systems, the justice system offers no solution to Hugh's search for a meaningful life. Hugh ends up taking his own life ironically with a piece of iron that he sharpened on the prison bars while Deb is listening in the next cell. Hugh lies "quite still, his arms outstreched," with only "the black nauseous stream of blood dripping slowly from the pallet to the floor" (61), resembling Christ's crucifixion.

After Hugh's sacrificial death, Deborah's redemption completes the story's mythic structure. The Quaker woman, who comes after Wolfe's death, offers salvation for Deb in religious form: "Only one woman. She came late, and outstayed them all. A Quaker, or Friend, as they call themselves. I think this woman was known by this name in heaven" (61). The Quaker woman presents Deb with the chance for a new life. The narrator says, "There is no need to tire you with the long years of sunshine, and fresh air, and slow, patient Christ-love, needed to make healthy and hopeful this impure body and soul"(63). Deborah's conversion saves her impure body and soul. Her soul was impure with the thoughts that they too deserve to live a decent life, they too deserve to have money. Sharon Harris comments that:

> Though Davis does not idealize the Quakers, they most often represent her alternative spiritual perspective. For decades, New England authors had employed Quaker characters in their writing as symbols of Puritan persecution, but Davis carried no New England guilt that needed to be thus expurgated. (53-54)

Although Davis demonstrates her awareness of the manipulative uses of religious discourse in the hands of people in power, in "Life in the Iron Mills," she wasn't able to present an alternative morality based solely on justice, fairness, freedom, and equality for human beings. Davis's story could be politically effective if she would present her solutions inside the realm of the human in actual circumstances rather than invoking divine authority to her rhetoric. A secular, humanist reason and politics instead of the religious one that Davis uses would give ethical and political agency to human beings. Yet, Davis's story is presented through a Christian lens from the beginning:

> I dare not put this secret into words. I told you it was dumb. These men, going by with drunken faces and brains full of unawakened power, do not ask it of society or of God. Their lives ask it; their deaths ask it. There is no reply. I will tell you plainly that I have a great hope; and I bring it to you to be tested. It is this: that this terrible dumb question is its own reply; that it is not the sentence of death we think it, but, from the very extremity

> of its darkness, the most solemn prophecy which the world has known of the Hope to come. (14)

Despite her argument that Davis's story is in fact critical of passive Christian morality, Sharon Harris nevertheless agrees with many critics that "this [passage] certainly seems to suggest a traditional Christian response, the reliance upon 'a pitying God.'"(50) Yet Harris goes on to say that "Davis challenges her readers' traditional securities: Egoism, Pantheism, passive Christianity" (50). We can see this continuous tension in "Life in the Iron Mills" between a traditional Christian morality and a radical socialism that tries to break free from it. Nevertheless, the religious language and imagery continuously imbue the narrator's presentation of the story:

> It [the story] will, perhaps, seem to you as foul and dark as this thick vapor about us, and as pregnant with death; but if your eyes are free as mine are to look deeper, no perfume-tinted dawn will be so fair with promise of the day that shall surely come. (14)

Davis announces "The promise of the day" in the beginning and closes her story with the same promise. The end of the

frame story tells us that the narrator comes across the korl woman hidden behind a curtain in the corner of her library: "While the room is yet steeped in heavy shadow, a cool, gray light suddenly touches its head like a blessing hand, and its groping arm points through the broken cloud to the far East, where, in the flickering, nebulous crimson, God has set the promise of the Dawn" (65).

In the end, the korl woman reminds us of the upper class narrator and the writer Rebecca Harding Davis, aiming to reach out but nevertheless trapped in her surroundings. Seeming to offer an optimistic future, the religious language and the imagery, here, reinforces the failure and hopelessness of achieving real equality and justice.

CHAPTER VI

A FAILED VISION OF DEMOCRACY IN EDWARD BELLAMY'S LOOKING BACKWARD

Edward Bellamy's utopian novel Looking Backward was quite popular in its time because of its progressive socialist views that offered hope in a time of economic and social distress. The novel sold over a million copies in its first ten years of publication. Although Bellamy's utopia attempts to offer secular solutions to the social and economic problems of nineteenth century industrialism, I will argue that it actually follows a conservative religious framework.

Edward Bellamy was born in 1850 and descended from a long line of New England clergymen. His great-great grandfather, Joseph Bellamy, was an associate of Jonathan Edwards. His father was a New England Baptist minister who instilled Calvinist values in him. His mother Maria educated him according to strict religious principles. As he learned about characteristic Calvinist beliefs about the depravity of man and his personal unworthiness, Bellamy

thought that these could be overcome by getting out of the limited confines of self and working for others. Bellamy's biographer, Sylvia Bowman mentions that he suffered a crisis of conscience in his early twenties and abandoned the religious teachings of his parents. Subsequently, he developed a personal religion; instead of the punishing Calvinist God, Bellamy described God as the "All-soul" or the "not-self," the "universal," the "centripetal force," and the "infinite" (Bowman 28). In Looking Backward, Dr. Leete explains this religion's importance for their society to Julian West:

> If I were to give you in one sentence, a key to what may seem the mysteries of our civilization as compared with that of your age, I should say that the solidarity of the race and the brotherhood of man, which to you were but fine phrases, are, to our thinking and feeling, ties as real and as vital as physical fraternity. (111)

According to Dr. Leete, a part of the universal force can be found in all men. In "The Religion of Solidarity," Bellamy defines the individual consciousness as comprising a personal and an impersonal self. Only through the

cultivation of impersonality, one can achieve solidarity and find solutions to social problems. In Looking Backward, the religion of solidarity as the basis of their society connects the utopians to each other and helps them abandon their individualism or "self-centeredness."

As Wilfred M. McClay, in his essay "Edward Bellamy and the Politics of Meaning," argues, Bellamy was not seeking merely social and economic reform in his utopian vision of social order. His project was more religious than social. McClay explains the problems with Bellamy's project:

> The desire to find meaning in life by sanctifying one's social world and the objects of one's labors should not be scorned. But it runs two risks. First, the risk of making us the self-conscious creators, rather than the discoverers, of what is sacred—a typically modern exercise in narcissism and futility. Second, the risk that, in seeking too ardently for a politics of meaning, it may lose sight of the meaning of politics. (37)

I agree with McClay. In Looking Backward, Bellamy is developing his own religion modeled after Christianity and inviting Julian West and the reader to convert into this

Religion of Solidarity. He is using a religion-based morality to promote social and political changes in his society. He is strategically utilizing the religious sensibilities of the nineteenth century reader by presenting his socialist views in the guise of Christianity. This was a reason why his novel could enjoy the best seller status of its time. In order to understand his ideological use of religion, we need to take a look at the religious elements in Looking Backward.

In her introduction to Bellamy's Looking Backward, Cecelia Tichi places the novel in the long line of Puritan tradition:

> The social and technological innovations of this futuristic novel only updated the scheme of national salvation that had been embedded in American culture since the seventeenth century. In sermons, political speeches, fiction, songs, poems, geography and history books, diaries and tracts, American writers had left a continuing national myth of destined glorious salvation. (18)

Puritans based their ideology on the Christian Bible as the only divinely inspired word of God. The Old and New

Testaments were the source of standards for behavior and belief. Their ideology reflected itself in typological thinking according to which the events in the New Testament were prefigured in the Old Testament. John Winthrop's "A Model of Christian Charity" is a typical example of Puritan thinking. As a Colonist Puritan in America, Winthrop identifies with the Israelites, the chosen people led by Moses. The journey to the New World was a new Exodus, ordained by God and foretold in the Bible, just as the Bible promised the creation of a New Jerusalem in America. America is the leader of the world in Looking Backward: "The great nations of Europe as well as Australia, Mexico, and parts of South America, are now organized industrially like the United States, which was the pioneer of the evolution" (115).

Puritans also believed in the coming of the Millennium, one thousand years of Christian Golden Age, following a period of conflict and confusion. As Tichi explains, "essentially, Bellamy employs the strategy of the Puritan Jeremiad and converts the crises of the Gilded Age into prophecies of the Millennium. The atmosphere of social upheaval in Boston--1887 is, in the eschatological scheme of things, a prelude to the epoch of the New Earth"

(22). Offered in the form of a religious promise, Bellamy's nationalist ideas establish their authority on the reader.

Other writers and thinkers of Bellamy's time also believed in religion's role to bring social change. In Half Finished Heaven: The Social Gospel in American Literature, William Graham explores the Social Gospel or Social Christianity movement:

> The mission was religious: to Christianize and humanize an industrial society. The movement attempted to bring religious meaning to the trauma of the new corporate, industrial society by emphasizing the social implications of religion as found in the teachings of the Hebrew prophets and Jesus. (1)

Graham argues that the genre of the novel was influential in developing the movement, especially as it relates to Rauschenbusch, the movement's strongest supporter and best spokesperson. Rauschenbusch describes the movement: "the development of what is called 'Social Christianity' or 'the Social Gospel,' is a fusion between the new understandings created by the social sciences, and the teachings and moral ideas of Christianity" (Quoted in Graham 3). Graham

summarizes the ultimate purpose of the supporters of this movement:

> The Social Gospelers, both theologians and novelists, operated with a sense of the millennial tradition of which the theory of manifest destiny was a type. This nation, already Christianized in part, was to become, they hoped, even more Christo-centric, with liberty and equality and fraternity for all sisters and brothers bound together in Christian community. (93)

According to Graham, certain novelists were specifically influential in the creation and the dissemination of the ideas that Social Gospelers promoted. Even though most of these writers weren't directly involved with the movement, they played important roles in the wider acceptance of the movement's ideology. For these novelists as well as the supporters of this movement:

> Aspirations to better lives and better times were not then a selfish desire, but an acknowledgment that God called all people to be better and more noble in a democratic, Christian America. Attaining this goal called not just for

> individual goodness, but for solidarity and corporate effort. (Graham 7)

Graham includes Bellamy in this group of novelists not as an essential part of the movement but as a writer whose chief ideas and values were parallel to those of the Social Gospelers and who helped towards wider acceptance of these ideas. Bellamy's Looking Backward was a call towards solidarity and corporate effort for the society's salvation. In the novel, economic, social, and moral reforms complement each other. Bellamy wrote his book at a time when the society was in dire need of transformation. And the religious sensibilities of the readers of the nineteenth century required a spiritual transformation as well as an economic and social one.

In Religion in the American Novel, Leo Connor points out that "Bellamy shared with the Social Gospel theologians a distress with the failure of Christian churches to bear witness against social injustice" (280). In Looking Backward, Bellamy expresses his dissatisfaction with the practice of Christianity in the late nineteenth century through a sermon delivered by the Reverend Mr. Barton in the year 2000:

> It must not be forgotten that the nineteenth century was in name Christian, and the fact that the entire commercial and industrial frame of society was the embodiment of anti-Christian spirit must have had some weight, though I admit it was strangely little, with the nominal followers of Jesus Christ. (200)

The practice of religion in the nineteenth century needed transformation. Dr. Barton's parable for the state of humanity in the previous century shows the need for that change. Dr. Barton, in his radio sermon, articulates Bellamy's concerns and compares humanity to "a rosebush planted in a swamp, watered with black bog water, breathing miasmatic fogs by day, and chilled with poison dew at night. Innumerable generations of gardeners had done their best to make it bloom, but…their efforts had been unsuccessful" (203-4).

Dr. Leete also voices Edward Bellamy's ideas about late nineteenth century America in the novel. Addressing Julian West, the nineteenth century Bostonian, Dr. Leete explains: "You must, at least, have realized that the widespread industrial and social troubles, and the underlying dissatisfaction of all classes with inequities

of society, and the general misery of mankind, were portents of great changes of some sort" (52). In Looking Backward, the transition from the Gilded Age to the Golden Age was handled in a way that didn't require Bellamy to deal with real solutions to complex issues. A young Bostonian gentleman, Julian West, wakes up after a more than a century long hypnotic sleep in his "subterranean sleeping chamber" to a society of social and economic equality. This long hypnotic sleep as a plot device gives Bellamy the opportunity to present his vision of the year 2000 without having to explain what it took to get there. What he presents is a bloodless transition to the Millennium. In the postscript to Looking Backward, Bellamy writes:

> All thoughtful men agree that the present aspect of society is portentous of great changes. The only question is, whether they will be for the better or the worse. Those who believe in man's essential nobleness lean to the former view, those who believe in his essential baseness to the latter. For my part, I hold to the former opinion. *Looking Backward* was written in the belief that the Golden Age lies before us not

> behind us, and is not far away. Our children will surely see it, and, we, too, who are already men and women, if we deserve it by our faith and by our works. (234)

The Golden Age Bellamy envisions is the reward based on the 'faith and works' of true believers. Although the novel deals with social and economic equality, Bellamy's main project is to revive the dream for the Golden Age and arouse religious sensibilities. In his essay, "Catching Up With Edward Bellamy," W. H. Halewood mentions that "most of Looking Backward … is not satire but promotional argument devoted to showing that the new society will be wonderfully agreeable to live in and absurdly easy to bring into existence" (454). In order for Bellamy to do this and convert the reader to his new religion and his new order of society, Dr. Leete has to make Julian West a believer of the new system. Dr. Leete tries to accomplish this in his long-winded monologues about the new society with wealth and harmony.

According to Bellamy, Julian West symbolizes what was wrong with nineteenth century thinking. He is selfish and has no concerns for the welfare of other people. His ideas

about the strikes by the laboring classes reflect his personality:

> As one of the wealthy, with a large stake in the existing order of things, I naturally shared the apprehensions of my class. The particular grievance I had against the working classes at the time of which I write, on account of the effect of their strikes in postponing my wedded bliss, no doubt lent a special animosity to my feeling toward them. (44)

Julian's suffering from insomnia can be seen as the symptom of his unacknowledged sense of guilt. His response to the troubled times is to have himself mesmerized in his protected chamber. He sleeps through the great transformation of society. In Alternative America, John L. Thomas comments:

> In fact Julian is spiritually dead, shut up in a burial vault of his own invention from which he is miraculously resurrected through the offices of a hypnotist and the marvel of suspended animation. Julian's escape from the prison of self is accomplished in a painful trauma that is

> the necessary condition for his moral rebirth. (238)

Therefore, within the logic of the novel, converting Julian to the Religion of Solidarity and facilitating his moral rebirth are important accomplishments. Gradually, West leaves his selfishness behind and becomes a useful member of Bellamy's socialist state: "With a clearness which I had not been able before to attain, I saw now the past and present, like contrasting pictures, side by side" (120).

Dr. Barton's radio sermon with its millennial prophecy brings Julian West's conversion to the Religion of Solidarity near completion:

> We are merely stripped for the race; no more. We are like a child which has just learned to stand upright and walk...humanity has entered on a new phase of spiritual development, an evolution of the higher faculties,...With a tear for the dark past, turn we then to dazzling future, and veiling our eyes, press forward. The long and weary winter of the race has ended. Its summer has begun. Humanity has burst the chrysalis. The heavens are before it. (206)

He carries these ideas with him in his nightmare pilgrimage back into the nineteenth century. His ideas and actions reflect his newfound faith in humanity and Christian charity. With his actions and ideas, he proves that Dr. Leete's tireless teachings weren't futile. When he wakes up from his nightmare, he "opens his eyes to see the heaven's vault spread above him, as [he] realized that [his] return to the nineteenth century had been the dream, and [his] presence in the twentieth was the reality" (230). In the end, he finds peace and compassion in the arms of Edith in the Garden of the New Earth. In The Utopian Novel in America 1886-1896, Jean Pfaelzer writes "And so the tormented aristocrat from another century ends his story in the arms of a liberated lady. But neither has traveled very far from 1887. As so often happens in romance, Julian returns to a familiar state of identity" (39).

With Julian West's conversion complete, Bellamy has only to worry about the readers' conversion. His goal, and his explicit purpose in writing Looking Backward, as he proclaimed in 1888, was to convert the cultured and educated classes (Bowman 1958 124). Although in its time it was read as a revolutionary socialist document and had many followers in its contemporary reading public,

exclusions in Bellamy's system of equality and solidarity prove problematic for the modern reader.

I think Bellamy's understanding of democracy resembles Aristotle's because they both ignore similar important elements. In his essay "Was Aristotle an 'Aristotelian Social Democrat'?" Richard Mulgan offers his critique of Martha Nussbaum for her "well-known identification with Aristotelianism as intellectual sources for the principles of social democracy"(79). He gives the definition of social democracy as:

> the type of welfare state democracy…in which the citizens use collective mechanisms to distribute the material needs of life to each other on the basis of need. Social democrats accept the basic principles of liberal democracy, such as equal voting rights and basic political freedoms, but add to them a concern for redistributing wealth through the state for the purpose of improving the life chances of the worst off. (80)

Mulgan observes that in the United States, the Greek philosophers and Athenian democracy play important roles in present-day discussions of liberals and conservatives. He also adds that "with so much at stake politically, there

must always be a temptation to read the ancient texts in a way that suits one's own position at the expense of distorting their historical meaning" (82). Ultimately Mulgan believes that this is what Nussbaum and "all those who read Aristotle as supporting democracy in general" (82) are doing. He argues that Aristotle is antidemocratic and antiliberal, especially in his treatment of women and slaves. Greeks excluded slaves and women from fully participating in democratic society and in his writing Aristotle justifies these exclusions "on the basis of supposed natural inferiority of slaves and women" (82).

In her response to Mulgan, Nussbaum says: "from the very beginning of my work on his [Aristotle's] political thought, I have stressed the stupidity and unacceptability of his arguments on slaves and women, which I consider, however, not to be the lodged at the heart of his conception" (108). I agree with Mulgan that the exclusions of certain human beings from participating in a democratic society should be at the heart of the discussion. Excusing or overlooking this by meaningless justifications will desensitize us and have severe consequences in present society. We can apply Mulgan's critique of Aristotelian democracy to Bellamy's utopian vision:

> ...the fact that much of Aristotle's ethics resonates so well with modern liberal experience, particularly that conveyed in the modern novel, may reveal something about the continuity and overall domesticity of the moral life lived by prosperous and educated elites. What the ethical worlds of Aristotle and Henry James have in common, one suspects, is a general indifference to the political context which sustains their society. (101)

Bellamy's socialist vision is also elitist. It is not working class socialism: in his utopia the reforms come from above, not from below. The president or general-in-chief is elected by members of the honorary guild. These are the elders who have already served time as generals of their guild and retired. In "Gender, Class, and Race in Utopia," Sylvia Straus comments on the election of the president: "Women elect leaders of their own industrial guilds but have no voice whatsoever in the presidency. Politics was to be a male preserve, and Bellamy's version of the suffrage is a travesty of the universal suffrage for which feminists were striving in the nineteenth century"

(76). Therefore the socialist future Bellamy offers has anti-democratic elements.

I think these elements are further supported by the novel's use of the privileged discourse of the biblical myths. The authoritative religious morality helps maintain the existing patterns of domination. In Looking Backward, Dr. Leete explains the secret of their success in getting rid of class differences:

> It is the worst thing about any system which divides men, or allows them to be divided, into classes and castes, that it weakens the sense of a common humanity... The equal wealth and equal opportunities of culture which all persons now enjoy have simply made us all members of one class, which corresponds to the most fortunate class with you. (125)

Although Bellamy's futuristic system assures equal material wealth for all citizens, his treatment of class, gender, and race is biased in favor of Bellamy's middle class and patriarchal outlook. Dr. Leete's comments about women and labor demonstrate the patriarchal nature of the utopian system:

> The men of this day so well appreciate that they owe to the beauty and grace of women the chief zest of their lives and their main incentive to effort, that they permit them to work at all only because it is full understood that a certain regular requirement of labor, of a sort adapted to their powers, is well for body and mind, during the period of maximum physical vigor. (185)

In fact, in Bellamy's egalitarian society, there is no real equality between the sexes. Although Bellamy gave them freedom from domestic chores, women are still confined to their roles as wives and mothers. They are excluded from fully participating in the society. Bellamy believes that there are essential differences between the sexes. As Jean Pfaelzer puts it, "Ultimately, Bellamy does accept his era's justifications for social inferiority of women and the working class; Boston in the year 2000 preserves many of the hierarchies that caused Julian's conscience to become atrophied in his first incarnation" (30). Women are permitted by men to work in their own industrial army modeled after the men's industrial army: "a sort of *imperium in imperio*" but "the inner *imperium* is one from

which you will admit there is not likely to be much danger to the nation" (186). Only women who are both wives and mothers can reach high ranks in the women's industrial army because "they alone fully represent their sex" (187). Doctor Leete tells Julian that the best function for utopian women is to inspire utopian men; they are men's "incentive to labor." Trying to offer a complete transformation of nineteenth century society, Edward Bellamy was unable to challenge the class and gender hierarchies of his time. In Looking Backward, Bellamy completely avoided or ignored the problem of racial inequality.

Straus interprets Bellamy's exclusion of women from the socialist state as the result of female domesticity and religiosity:

> Bellamy viewed women's acceptance of church hierarchy as the cause of their shriveled lives, making them docile, clinging, and superstitious. Given women's religious conservatism, they were potential dissidents from the state religion. The ground was thus prepared for providing women with a lower status than men enjoyed in Bellamy's utopia. ( )

Bellamy's religion of solidarity is a male territory. Women, with their strong affinity to traditional Christianity, are threats to social progress. As a follower of Bellamy's religion, Dr. Leete does not show interest in the sermons that the female members of the family still listen to through the impersonal medium of radio. Because of their attachment to church Christianity, women cannot be included in the patriarchal system of the industrial army organized along strict military lines. By invoking religious authority through the use of biblical language, imagery and format, Bellamy justifies the asymmetrical relationship of power between man and women. Ironically, he poses women's 'natural' affinity towards traditional Christianity as their weakness.

The industrial army is the heart of Bellamy's organization in Looking Backward. It is also not free from anti-democratic elements. Dr. Leete explains away the hierarchical structure of the industrial army as: "I have shown that the system is arranged to encourage the weaker as well as the stronger with the hope of rising, while the fact that the stronger are selected for the leaders is in no way a reflection upon the weaker, but in the interest of the common weal" (109).

In Alternative America, John L. Thomas comments on the products of this industrial army:

> The industrial army is thus an army, not merely by virtue of its hierarchical organization, but also in the obedience and self-denial it enforces. The social product it manufactures is a machinelike man, in earlier times simply the basic unit in the disposition and maneuvering of military forces but now the creation identical industrial, educational, and reformatory principles. (250)

Dr. Leete is a good example to the machine-like men that the industrial army produces. He is rational to a point of being cold and distant. He is such a great follower of the Religion of Solidarity that he is emotionally disengaged from anything personal to a point of loosing his identity. Family members in the Leete household also do not show emotions towards each other. Although Edith of the year 2000 strikes Julian as the new, liberated woman, she is as intimidated as the nineteenth century Edith. The utopian cultural life is also depersonalized. Instead of going to church or a concert, and other social events, the utopians tune their radio to the channel of their choice.

The utopian industrial army works towards the realization of Bellamy's religious values and the justification for the work ethic to sustain the futuristic state is found in the teachings of Bible:

> Every man shall serve the nation for a fixed period…With the exception of this fundamental law, which is, indeed, merely a codification of the law of nature—the edict of Eden—our system depends in no particular upon legislation, but is entirely voluntary, the logical outcome of the operation of human nature under national conditions. (150)

God was a crucial part of Bellamy's industrial army: "By requiring every man his best you have made God his task master, and by making honor the sole reward of achievement you have imparted to all service the distinction peculiar in my day to the soldier's"(LB).

Edward Bellamy's novel Looking Backward is a religious fable. What he offers to his reader is the idea that in order to attain social and economic equality and reach America's Millennium, they should follow his religious morality. Bellamy was an excellent tactician who was able to time the promotion of his ideology and his religious

values at a time of great distress for laboring classes. In his book Authoritarian Socialism in America, Arthur Lipow comments on this timing and the outstanding reception of the book by the contemporary readers:

> The feelings of impotence produced by their inability to alter or control political and economic events opened up such people to Bellamy's vision of a totally organized society...For the lonely crowd, whose instincts of individual virtue made all partial organization seem like a jail, only total organization from above could offer a utopia that would be bearable. (104)

Although the readers were ready for this authoritarian organization, Bellamy thought that they weren't quite ready to face socialism head on. He adopted the name of Nationalism for his Christian, state socialism. He feared that the term "socialism" might have an effect on the reception of his ideas. In one of his letters to William Dean Howells, Bellamy wrote about his strategic decision:

> every sensible man will admit there is a big deal in a name, especially in making first impressions. In the radicalness of the opinions

> I have expressed, I may seem to out-socialize the socialists, yet the word socialist is one I never could well stomach. In the first place it is a foreign word in itself, and equally foreign in all its suggestions. It smells to the average American of petroleum, suggests the red flag, and with all manner of sexual novelties, and an abusive tone about God and religion, which in this country we at least treat with respect. (Quoted in Bowman 114)

Looking Backward was written to convince the readers that the Nationalist utopia that Bellamy painted was a superior alternative to the injustice and corruption of the nineteenth century. Through Dr. Leete's monologues, Bellamy supplied overwhelming information about how perfect and attainable this future society was.

Bellamy wanted to sugarcoat the pill of his heavily didactic narrative with a romance plot. This was yet another strategic move to keep the interest of the readers. "Warned by a teacher's experience that learning is accounted a weariness to the flesh, the author sought to alleviate the instructive quality of the book by casting it in the form of a romantic narrative" which he hoped would

be "not wholly devoid of interest on its own account" (35). For present day readers, as a piece of literature, the result was a sentimental plot with flat characters and didactic intent. Yet Looking Backward, captured the attention of the readers in its time because of its strategically manipulative use of religion in promoting the values of Bellamy's ideology. Straus interprets the vanishing success of the book in time: "The Bellamy phenomenon was a fad, a popular response to troubled times. Looking Backward gained its enormous success because Bellamy was an expert at the sort of self promotion that today is called media hype" (89). Northrop Frye has also observed that:

> Looking Backward had, in its day, a stimulating and emancipating influence on the social thinking of the time in a way that very few books in the history of literature have ever had. Yet most of us today would tend to read it as a sinister blueprint of tyranny, with its industrial 'army,' its stentorian propaganda delivered over the 'telephone' to the homes of its citizens, and the like. (Quoted in Connor 283)

I believe the influence that Looking Backward had on its readers depended largely on its use of religious language and imagery rather than the "emancipating influence" of his socialist ideas. Because of his dependence on the privileged authority of the biblical discourse, Bellamy's vision of democracy fails to promote justice and equality for all.

CHAPTER V

POLITICS OR CONVERSION IN JOHN STEINBECK'S THE GRAPES OF WRATH

The religious context of The Grapes of Wrath as much if not more than the political, philosophical and economic aspects of the novel has concerned readers and critics of Steinbeck's work ever since the novel was published. As many critics earlier have noted, The Grapes of Wrath contains many echoes of and allusions to the Bible. The journey of the Joad family together with other migrants from the dustbowl to California in search of better living conditions represents a significant social and economical moment in history. Between 1934 and 1939, dust storms ruined 100 million acres of farmland and forced great numbers of farmers off their land and west towards California. Yet in The Grapes of Wrath, the story of the immigrant farmers is told in a narrative that echoes the biblical exodus to the Promised Land. Despite the fact that Steinbeck hints at a possible revolution to transform the system of subordination and domination, his ultimate

solution is a change of heart based on conversion to a religious morality. This is problematic because thorough this conversion, Steinbeck takes the political initiative away from the people and thus fails to change patterns of domination.

The title of Steinbeck's novel is taken from a patriotic song "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" ("He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored") which is a direct Christian allusion, suggesting the glory of the coming of Lord: "And the angel thrust his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God" (Rev. 14:19). In The Grapes of Wrath, when the migrant workers' sufferings reach inhuman limits, Steinbeck writes:

> And they stand still and watch the potatoes float by, listen to the screaming pigs being killed in a ditch and covered with quick-lime, watch the mountains of oranges slop down to a putrefying ooze; and in the eyes of the people, there is the failure; and in the eyes of the hungry there is a growing wrath. In the souls of the people the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy, growing heavy for the vintage. (385)

While the hungry people are watching, the fruits are left to rot or destroyed because the landowners cannot take any profit from them. The selfishness and the greed of the landowners inflict immeasurable pain on the workers. The title of the novel is seen as the warnings of what can happen when people get united in action against social injustice. In this interchapter, Steinbeck uses a familiar form of biblical discourse—the jeremaid—often aimed to move a people toward repentance. Yet the time for the vintage never comes in the novel. I will argue that the political ineffectiveness of the novel is the result of Steinbeck's reliance on biblical justice rather than presenting his politics based on human' right to justice and equality.

Stephen Railton mentions that Steinbeck wanted the whole of the patriotic song printed with the novel. Steinbeck explained his reasons for this in a letter to his editor:

> The fascist crowd will try to sabotage this book because it is revolutionary. They try to give it the communist angle. However, The Battle Hymn is American and intensely so…. So if both words and music are there the book is keyed into the

American scene from the beginning. (Quoted in Railton 166)

Steinbeck wanted his readers to see the novel not only as the predicament of migrant workers in a specific place and in a specific historical period but also as a work about America. The first settlers of this country imagined America as the New Canaan, New Jerusalem, New Paradise. Colonists such as William Bradford's pilgrims at Plymouth thought of themselves as the chosen people. Their typological imagination let them see their predicament paralleling the situation of the Israelites, leaving Egypt and finding the Promised Land. This biblical consciousness gave birth to the American myth, a national narrative that involved leaving the past and starting anew in a Promised Land. Steinbeck continuously explored the American myth in his writing. His search for the American Myth in The Grapes of Wrath demonstrates America as a nation solidly founded on the principles of the Bible.

In "Christian Symbolism in The Grapes of Wrath," Martin Shockley examines the biblical elements in the novel. His essay offers a thorough argument about the Christian context of the novel. He argues that the main characters, events and language in the novel allude to

Christian theology and literature. Shockley underlines the parallels and the allusions to the Bible "Like the Israelites, the Joads are a homeless and persecuted people. They too flee from oppression, wander through a wilderness of hardship, seeking their own Promised Land" (139). Shockley also comments about the similarities between Casy and Jesus: "Jesus began his mission after a period of withdrawal into the wilderness for meditation and consecration…. Like Jesus, Jim has rejected an old religion and is in process of replacing it with a new gospel" (139). Shockley points out that "Casy's death symbolically occurs in the middle of a stream to represent the "crossing over Jordan' Christian motif" (142). Casy's last words before he was killed, "you fellas don' know what you're doin'," also echoes what Jesus said, as they crucified him. Shockley adds to his argument that Jim Casy is not the only character that resembles Jesus. Tom Joad and Rose of Sharon also reflect qualities of Jesus Christ. According to Shockley, "In The Grapes of Wrath, the major intended meaning…is…essentially and thoroughly Christian" (144).

Although I think Shockley presents a convincing argument about the biblical allusions in The Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck's novel is too complicated to allow a

rigid allegorical reading. Similar to Bellamy and Davis's positions in their writings, Steinbeck is often critical of fundamental Christianity, and he creates his own version of Christianity mixed with the popular ideologies of his time. In The Log to Sea of Cortez, a work of non-fiction written a year after the publication of The Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck explains his understanding of religion:

> And it is strange that most of the feeling we call religious, most of the mystical outcrying which is one of the most prized and used and desired reactions of our species, is really the understanding and the attempt to say that man is related to the whole thing, related inextricably to all reality, known and unknowable. This is a simple thing to say, but the profound feeling of it made a Jesus, a St. Augustine, a St. Francis, a Roger Bacon, a Charles Darwin, and an Einstein. Each of them in his own tempo and with his own voice discovered and reaffirmed with astonishment the knowledge that all things are one thing and that one thing is all things. (929)

Steinbeck explored this idea of unity in one throughout his career. In The Grapes of Wrath, Casy voices this new

religion, a mixture of Emersonian Oversoul and Christian principles and discourse. Casy explains to Tom: "Maybe,' I figgered, 'maybe it's all men an' all women we love; maybe that's the Holy Sperit—the human sperit—the whole shebang. Maybe all men got one big soul ever'body's a part of" (24) When the Joad family asks Casy to say grace before breakfast—because they haven't been converted to Jim Casy's version of religion at this moment—Casy's grace demonstrates the social context of his new found religion: "But when they're all workin' together, not one fella for another fella, but one fella kind of harnessed to the whole shebang—that's right, that's holy" (88).

Throughout the novel, Steinbeck develops his idea of the group-man or "phalanx." In Chapter 14, one of the interchapters that give the hints and warnings of a possible revolution of the working class, Steinbeck names this group-man as "Manself" and their social awakening "the beginning—from 'I' to 'we'" (165): "In the evening a strange thing happened: the twenty families became one family, the children were the children of all. The loss of home became one loss, and the golden time in the West was one dream" (213). The individual families who leave their lands, homes, and cherished possessions with the hopes of

finding jobs in California become "manself" in their shared misery: "The families, which had been units of which the boundaries were a house at night, a farm by days, changed their boundaries. In the long hot night, they were silent in the cars moving slowly westward; but at night they integrated with any group they found" (215).

In "Steinbeck, the People, and the Party," Sylvia Jenkins Cook writes about Steinbeck's idea of "manself" and the political ineffectiveness of the novel:

> Had Steinbeck rested The Grapes of Wrath on this ideological refinement of group man, it might well have been a more satisfactory proletarian novel; instead he chose to extend the context of the group not just beyond the biological to the political and moral level, but beyond that to the mystical and transcendental. (353)

I agree with Cook. Despite the fact that Steinbeck was writing a socialist novel aiming to expose the miserable predicament of the migrant workers and the greed and selfishness of the owning class and promote awareness and social change, much of his solutions remain in the realm of the spiritual, the transcendental, the sacred rather than the realm of the human. Steinbeck invites the readers to

convert to his religion together with the main characters in the novel.

The Grapes of Wrath starts with Casy's conversion from strict church rules to his newly found religion. The impulse for Casy's religion is still Christian love but during his contemplative period alone in the woods, he came to reject the rigidity of church Christianity that he had been an important part of. Throughout the novel, one after the other, all the main characters in the novel convert to Casy's religion. Initially, only Casy voices Steinbeck's religious idea of "all things are one thing and that one thing is all things." Then other characters follow his lead.

Ma changes in the course of her journey. She replaces her belief in God with the belief in the unity of people. Instead of caring for her own family only, she comes to accept and care for the other migrant families they encounter along the way. Gradually she learns the new belief from Casy and her comforting words to Tom demonstrate her new way of thinking: "Why, Tom—us people will go on livin' when all them people is gone. Why, Tom, we're the people that live. They ain't gonna wipe us out. Why, we're the people—we go on" (310).

From the beginning, Tom Joad accepts Jim Casy as his mentor and undergoes transformation of character following Jim Casy's lead. Tom's parting words to Ma show his indoctrination into Casy's belief:

> well, maybe like Casy says, a fella ain't got a soul of his own, but on'y a piece of a big one—an'then---" "Then it don' matter. Then I'll be aroun' in the dark. I'll be ever'where—wherever you look. Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there. If Casy knowed, why, I'll be in the way guys yell when they're mad an'—I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry an' they know supper's ready. An' when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build—why, I'll be there. See? God, I'm talkin' like Casy. (463)

These conversions to Steinbeck's understanding of religion culminate in Rose of Sharon's selfless act in the final scene. Rose of Sharon's mysterious smile with the stranger in her arms signifies her satisfaction in her redefinition of herself as part of one. Despite the attention paid to external factors such as the social, historical,

environmental, economic circumstances, Steinbeck' final solution to the problems of the migrant workers can be found not in a social revolution but in religious conversion.

The Grapes of Wrath was a great success in its time and continued to get critical attention over the years. An important reason for the success of the novel is the compassion Steinbeck showed in presenting the Joad family and the other migrant families they encounter along their journey as genuine characters. Their dehumanization under unequal economic conditions is portrayed convincingly in the novel: "Well, Okie use'ta mean you was from Oklahoma. Now it means you're a dirty son-of-a-bitch. Okie means you're scum. Don't mean nothing itself, it's the way they say it" (225). Although he was aptly criticized by Michael Barry "because the colloquial philosophy of its farmers seems to be merely a translation of some of Steinbeck's thoughts, because its symbolism is overdone, and because the mass of mythic images employed in it are confusing more than enlightening" 122), nevertheless he created memorable characters with strong personalities. Steinbeck wanted to present the migrants as realistically as possible. In fact, Steinbeck spent some time traveling with them to

observe their life. He took pains to make sure their language, ideas, concerns were well represented. Sylvia Jenkins Cook comments on the success of the novel:

> Steinbeck's novel had succeeded in the 1930s not merely because of its topicality but also because of the skill with which he had documented the voices and lives of the migrants, the carefully fostered dialectical debate between the chapters and interchapters, the compassion with which the novel demanded a moral response from its readers. (358)

Steinbeck demanded a moral response from the readers through his heart wrenching depiction of human endurance. In The Log from the Sea of Cortez, Steinbeck wrote about his rhetorical strategy in the novel: "I've done my damndest to rip a reader's nerves to rags"(178). In Uncle Tom's Cabin, Harriet Beecher Stowe used a similar technique while demonstrating the evils of slavery. As Stephen Railton, in his essay "Pilgrims' Politics: Steinbeck's Art of Conversion," comments, "It is a good technique for a protest novel. The narrative enacts its own kind of oppression, and, by arousing in its readers a desire to fight this sense of inevitability, it works strategically

to arouse us toward action to change the status quo" (32). The novel wouldn't have the same impact that it has on the readers without hungry children waiting around for someone to give them a bite to eat, Ma's courage and sacrifice to sit next to granma's dead body until the family safely crosses over California, the stillborn baby, and Rose of Sharon's final incredible act of compassion.

Stephen Railton connects Steinbeck's strategy "to rip a reader's nerves to rags" with the use of biblical imagery and language in The Grapes of Wrath:

> We could explain Steinbeck's use of biblical typology along the same lines, as a purely rhetorical strategy. "Large numbers of readers" could not be expected to endorse militant socialism. Instead, Steinbeck shrewdly insinuates his revolutionary vision by presenting it in the familiar guise of Christianity...Every novel of purpose must make some compromises with its audience if it wants to reach and move them. (40)

I agree with Railton's idea that Steinbeck compromises his politics in order to reach the audience. The compromise is evident especially in the final scene of the novel.

Steinbeck's ending in The Grapes of Wrath is the most controversial part of the novel. Throughout the novel, Rose of Sharon transforms from a selfish individual to a caring human being. At the end of the novel, after the tragic loss of her baby, she offers her breast to the starving old man who would otherwise die. This selfless act complements Steinbeck's understanding of a family of mankind without any boundaries. It is an ending that is shocking and disturbing yet meant to be optimistic for the human race. However it leaves the feeling that nothing changes. In his essay "Audience and Closure in The Grapes of Wrath," Nicholas Visser comments on the ending of the novel:

> In short, the final moments end up telling the oppressed and exploited the old story: social justice can emerge only when there is a universal change of heart, only when people decide to be kinder to each other—a message which has always consoled those who gain advantage from the *status quo* more than it has those who bear the costs of social inequity. (28)

Steinbeck's idea that social transformation can be accomplished through inner change proves ineffective to provide a solution to the economic injustice presented in

the novel. Throughout the novel, Steinbeck alternates two styles of narration. The interchapters offer a panoramic view of the immigrant workers' predicament whereas the narrative chapters give the close up of the Joad family's journey from Oklahoma to California. In his essay "Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath," Louis Owens comments:

> In this way Steinbeck can make the reader feel the immensity of the social, historical tragedy unfolding while simultaneously he allows the reader to participate in the drama along with the Joads, to feel very personally the pain and trauma of the Joads and, thus, of all of the displaced migrants. (99)

Despite the hints of a possible revolution of the working class in the interchapters, Steinbeck chooses to finish his novel with a narrative chapter that brings the remaining members of the Joad family into a barn, sheltering them from the approaching floodwaters. In "Artistic and Thematic Structure in The Grapes of Wrath," J. P. Hunter emphasizes the biblical elements that symbolize change at the end of the novel:

> As the Joads hover in one dry place in their world—a barn—the Bible's three major symbols of a

> purified order are suggested: the Old Testament deluge, the New Testament stable, and the continuing ritual of communion. In the fusion of the three, the novel's mythic background, ideological progression, and modern setting are brought together; Mt. Ararat, Bethlehem, and California are collapsed into a single unit of time, and life is affirmed in a massive symbol of regeneration. (154)

The improbability of Rose of Sharon's gesture aside, I think that the biblical allusions are quite significant here. Steinbeck invokes divine authority by utilizing the authority of the biblical discourse. The lack of a viable solution to workers' problems is covered up by the Christian elements that symbolize hope.

Through Rose of Sharon's act, Steinbeck demonstrates the human endurance and compassion and implies that the revolution will start inside human beings. His final emphasis remains on the interpersonal level. Repeatedly in The Grapes of Wrath, we witness the migrant families' strength to endure homelessness, pain, and hunger and everything else that comes their way, but Steinbeck does not provide real solutions to their problems. According to

Visser, Steinbeck is incapable of "imagining a solution" to the economic and political problems of the migrant workers: "...there is always a sense of holding back at the last moment, of taking fright at the very possibilities for widespread uprising which the novel discloses" (30).

Although The Grapes of Wrath gives bourgeois readers and its writer a comforting sense of compassion towards the laboring class, the novel does not offer an option to replace the status quo. Despite the fact that Steinbeck was writing about the working class, he wasn't writing for them. His audience is essentially the people who can afford and find the leisure time to enjoy best-sellers. He wrote with the idea to arouse compassion for the migrant workers. Yet the strategies he employed trying to reach his audience caused the dilution of the novel's politics. Another reason behind the choices Steinbeck made in his novel is the "non-teleological thinking" that he was exploring.

In The Log from the Sea of Cortez, Steinbeck and Ricketts defined their philosophy of "non-teleological thinking." Teleology is defined in the glossary of the Log as "The assumption of predetermined design, purpose, or

ends in Nature by which an explanation of phenomena is postulated" (977). The authors add:

> What we personally conceive by the term "teleological thinking"...is most frequently associated with the evaluation of causes and effects, the purposiveness of events...In their sometim intolerant refusal to face the facts as they are, eleological notions may substitute a fierce but ineffectual attempt to change conditions which are assumed to be undesirable, in place of the understanding--acceptance which would pave the way for a more sensible attempt at any change might still be indicated. (861)

Steinbeck uses non-teleological thinking in The Grapes of Wrath. Without assigning blame to anybody, actually dividing it equally among all the parties involved, he looks at the predicament of the workers as it stands and proposes a solution of a universal change of heart. In The Log, Steinbeck and Ricketts write that "non-teleological or 'is' thinking might be substituted in part for the usual cause-effect method...This attitude has no bearing on what might be or could be if so-and-so happened. It merely considers conditions 'as is'" (861). As Casy says towards

the beginning of the novel, "There ain't no sin, there ain't no virtue. There's just stuff people do. It's all part of the same. And some of the things folks do is nice, and some ain't nice, but that's as far as any man got a right to say" (24).

I think that non-teleological thinking might be appropriate and useful in the marine biology that Steinbeck and Ricketts write about in The Log from the Sea of Cortez, but it is difficult to treat the social and economic injustice against the migrant workers in the novel as an "as is" situation. The understanding and acceptance of the situation that Steinbeck had according to non-teleological thinking generated a solution that is outside the realm of humanistic.

I find Stephen Railton's comments on the ineffectiveness of the use of religion in promoting social change quite significant:

> Can anything but a social revolution change that [capitalist] system? *Pilgrim's Progress*, like the sermons Casy preached before losing his original faith, is about getting to heaven; that kind of salvation depends upon inner change. But Steinbeck wants to save the nation from its sins.

> Babies like Rose of Sharon's are dying because of social inequalities and economic injustices. Can the private, spiritual birth of a New Man or a New Woman--the unrecorded 'event' that the novel leaves at the center of its narrative and its vision--affect that? (46)

The answer is no. The problems that are at the heart of the novel are social and economic problems. It is the capitalistic system that causes endless suffering for the family of Joads and the other migrant worker families like them. Steinbeck's belief that social change can be accomplished through inner transformation has its echoes in the Puritan past. From the first day the Colonial Europeans invaded the continent, they benefited from the authority of the biblical discourse to maintain their domination over the "other." The same privileged discourse functions in The Grapes of Wrath as a reminder that the unequal social dynamics will continue to crush people like the Joads.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Politics and religion have always been intertwined throughout the history of the United States, starting from the colonial beginning to the present. When the European colonizers first started their invasion of the 'new' continent, through their typological imagination, they depended on the monologic authority of the biblical discourse to overcome the difficulties of starting life anew in the 'Promised Land.' The same way of thinking justified the domination and dehumanizing of the outsiders.

Views that subordinate politics to the dogmas of religion come dangerously close to intellectual and political tyranny. Within the context of politics, appealing to the idea of the sacred based on a specific religion's teachings sets up the stage for authoritarian monologue and closes the door on the pluralism and dialogue that a democratic society thrives on. Religious morality can define one's interpersonal relationships and occupy the private realm, but concepts like democracy, equality, and

justice should be discussed and defended within the realm of the human, today, in actual historical circumstances, not in the realm of the sacred and in a projected future.

Following Aristotle's definition of ethics, I believe that ethical values are always dependent on particular situations, particular circumstances. As a post-enlightenment humanist, I believe in the positive influence of skepticism towards timeless and universal morality that religions promote. Ethics are not universal or timeless; they have a contextual framework from various viewpoints. Ethics include political concepts of equality, justice, and freedom; they concern everybody who is interested in the future of democratic principles.

Novels are important social narratives that reflect significant information about the ideologies of their time. Any representation of life is inevitably ideological hence it involves justification and manipulation of ideas. Yet manipulative use of religious morality in a context that is outside the human realm is against the basic concepts of democracy because it is used to reinforce and maintain patterns of domination and subordination. In this study, I argue that the religious morality reflected in selected American social novels helped maintain these systems of

domination. When religious morality is used as a political tool, there is always the danger that it serves the interest of the dominant class and helps the ones who benefit from the status quo. All four of the writers examined in this study utilize the monologic authority of biblical discourse in promoting their ideologies about social change. By appealing to the common readers' sense of religiosity, they establish their authority as writers. The novels selected in this study demonstrate that the use of religious morality to promote political ideology ranges from a worldview that is limited to a religious consciousness to strategically manipulative use of religious morality.

In Uncle Tom's Cabin, Harriet Beecher Stowe's invocation of divine authority and use of religious morality are problematic because instead of offering solutions to the social and political complications of slavery within the realm of the human, she endorses a silent, enduring Christian consciousness. The religious rhetoric of the novel functions as yet another way of controlling, dominating, and exerting power over a group of people. Similar to Harriet Beecher Stowe's solution to racism and slavery, the solution Davis brings to the

problems of industrial capitalism is in the embracing of a silent, loving Christianity and the hope of salvation in the other world. In his socialist utopia, Edward Bellamy offers his readers the idea that in order to attain social and economic equality and reach America's Millennium, they should follow his religious morality. The anti-democratic elements and domination patterns that he maintains in his democratic vision are justified and reinforced by Christian morality. In The Grapes of Wrath, the political ineffectiveness of the novel is the result of Steinbeck's reliance on biblical justice rather than politics based on humans' right to justice and equality. In all of these novels, despite the professed aims to promote social change, the morality based on religion limits people's options for political action. Progressive political novels should empower human beings to take political initiative and become ethical agents rather than leaving them in the mercy of a protecting or punishing God.

These novels reflect the ideologies of their time but they also play a significant role in understanding the society of today. Especially now, the beginning of a new millennium, is a great time to look back and reflect on the past and present. In "The Century: A Nation's Eye View,"

Eric Foner comments on the problems American democracy faces today:

> Yet in our own country, democracy is in disarray: fewer than half of the population bothers to vote, and distrust of government as an alien and intrusive force is pervasive. Much of this disillusionment stems from the popular belief (not unreasonable, based on recent experience) that our political system is so corrupted by money that only wealthy individuals and giant corporations can expect to have their interests attended to by the state. (7)

The citizen's decision to vote in order to have their ideas represented in the decisions about the future of their country is an ethical choice. Although I understand the disillusionment with political leaders, I am still enthusiastic about the results of participatory democracy. The apathy towards politics is one of the growing trends in society. Yet the citizens should be aware of the negative consequences of this tendency. The indifference towards politics and ethics sets the stage for possible threats towards individual freedom and democracy. The manipulative use of religious morality in the guise of absolute and

timeless values is one of these threats. When partisan religion is used from the position of power to keep the "other" in the subordinated state and maintain the status quo, democracy suffers.

In Godless Constitution: The Case Against Religious Correctness, Isaac Kramnick comments that:

> Some of the founders of this nation were Christian; others were not. Many of them were members of churches; many others were not. What they shared was a view that religion should not divide people, an opinion that provided them with sufficient reason to exclude God-based claims from most sorts of political debate. (150)

There are still many politicians in positions of power who think of ethics only within the realm of sacred rather than in the contextuality of human beings in actual circumstances. This also allows them to ignore issues related to ethics in secular sense. The result is often the ideological use of religious morality to establish power over people. In his overview of the last century, Eric Foner comments on the resurgence of once discredited ideas:

> As the century draws to a close, long-discredited ideas (social Darwinism, belief in inborn racial inequality and the "natural" differences between the sexes) again occupy respected positions in public discourse. Today's attack on affirmative action, abortion rights, freedom of expression and the separation of church and state remind us that, as the abolitionist Thomas Wentworth Higginson put it during the Civil War, "revolutions may go backwards" (6).

These are ideas by people who are aiming to dominate and maintain control over certain segments of society.

Similarly, in Turkey, the divisive ideology of fundamentalists is resurfacing repeatedly in different guises. Fundamentalism is presently emerging in new political parties even after one main fundamentalist party was closed because of its anti-democratic attemp to replace secular law with the Islamic law. In his book, Militan Demokrasi (Militant Democracy), Vural Savas writes about the systematic organization of the religious fundamentalists in every possible public venue, threatening the future of Turkish democracy. He calls for a militant democracy, a concept that he borrows from the German

Constitution–"Streitbare Demokratie," (7) to protect the democratic ideals that he values immensely. The idea of a militant democracy is his solution to the present political circumstances in Turkey. Although the measures he proposes can be seen as anti-democratic, he offers a secular solution within the contextuality of Turkish politics. Any evaluation of his thought must take that context into account. The concept of democracy differs from one country to another. Immersed in the contingent contexts of their lives, Turkish and American citizens will have to determine the details of their democracies for themselves.

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